My Sporting Holidays

Sir Henry Seton-Karr

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MY SPORTING HOLIDAYS

The Monarch of the Divide.

MY
SPORTING HOLIDAYS

BY

SIR HENRY SETON-KARR, C.M.G., M.P.

AUTHOR OF 'THE CALL TO ARMS, 1900-1901'

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

MY BROTHER-SPORTSMEN OF THE ANGLO-SAXON RACE

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

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PREFACE

THIS volume contains a selection of the sporting incidents with rod and rifle that have fallen to my lot in portions of two hemispheres during a period extending over thirty years.

It has been my habit, when shooting or fishing in Scotland and Ireland, and during my different travelling and hunting expeditions in Norway and in North America, to keep a diary or record of the sport enjoyed, as well as frequently to carry a camera, so I hope I may claim for my narrative that it is strictly veracious, if no more.

At the same time it has been my endeavour to avoid, so far as is consistent with this kind of record, the mere expansion of a shooting and fishing diary, and so the matter is arranged in order of sport rather than chronologically.

While a greater part of the text is new, some portions have already appeared from time to time as articles in the *Badminton* and *Pall Mall* magazines, and in the pages of *Country Life* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. To the respective editors of these publications my grateful acknowledgments are due for leave to reproduce these articles, in some cases rewritten and expanded, in their present form.

Chapters XIV. and XV. are an attempt to portray

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some more human aspects of wild western life as I actually found it in my own personal experience. The last chapter, on 'Sporting Rifles and their Use,' is a brief endeavour to deal with a subject of common interest to all deer-stalkers and big-game hunters, and one that I have always found attractive.

Of the illustrations, three are from original drawings, for which I am indebted to Mr. E. Caldwell. The remainder are all reproductions from my own photographs, one of Mr. Caldwell's drawings—the live buffalo—being an accurate representation of one of these photographs.

I am conscious of the many shortcomings of this book. It has been written and compiled during the strain and stress of a busy life, and in the intervals of an arduous Parliamentary session. But the kindly favour with which my previous articles were received by my brother-sportsmen has encouraged me to this further pleasant task—pleasant, because we all of us like 'to fight our battles o'er again.'

My design, then, has been, not so much to instruct and to inform, as, perchance, to amuse and entertain. If the volume serves—for my general readers—to while away a leisure hour; for the fraternity of fishing and shooting men—to remind some of their own holidays; and—for the younger generation—to encourage a few to the reasonable pursuit, when opportunity arises, of health-giving and virile relaxations—then its object is amply attained.

H. S-K.

47, Chester Square, S.W.,
July, 1904.

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MY SPORTING HOLIDAYS

CHAPTER I

MY FIRST STAG—AND SOME OTHERS

It was in 1872 that it occurred to my friend Alex MacGregor and myself, then undergraduates at Oxford, that it might be necessary for our health to cross the North Sea for the Long Vacation. Throndhjem was the most distant Norwegian port that could be reached by the Wilson line from Hull, and to Throndhjem therefore we sailed in July of that year. On arrival at the ancient Scandinavian capital, in whose fjord a British squadron then lay at anchor, being there to assist in celebrating the coming coronation of a Scandinavian King, we made inquiries at Consul R. Kjeldsberg's well-known emporium as to routes and sport. It was there and then that I first heard of the island of Hitteren, where I have since spent many happy seasons in wild woodland sport, and with which I have now a thirty years' intimate acquaintance.

The island of Hitteren lies slantwise across the mouth of the Throndhjem Fjord, and some three miles away from the rocky coast-line of the mainland,

within measurable distance of the Arctic Circle, but saved from an Arctic climate by the warm current of the Gulf Stream. It is among the largest of the islands that fringe the coast of Norway, being about forty miles in length by fifteen broad, with pine-clad fjelds up to 1,500 feet in height, and containing innumerable lakes and streams. Here it was, amid dark-green forest, purple heather and yellow marsh, that I saw and killed my first red-deer stag those thirty years ago. I have since hunted and killed many a warrantable stag, as well as his magnificent relative, the wapiti bull of North America. But I shall never forget the incidents of that first kill, nor the pleasurable emotions that pervaded my whole being as I gazed on the deer as he lay dead at my feet.

Our visit to Consul R. Kjeldsberg was short and decisive. There were red-deer, we were told, to be shot on Hitteren; also grouse and blackgame, with trout-fishing thrown in. Some farms were now to be had on lease, and, by a fortunate coincidence, the leading land-owner of the island, Christopher Ström by name, was then in Throndhjem, and returning by the next boat.

It was obviously destined that Hitteren was the place for us to go to. The finger of Fate was clearly pointing in that direction, and, accordingly, a little later found us on board a fjord steamer. Five hours after we landed on the seaweedy rocks of Havn Bay, in the early morning of a lovely July day. At that time the best shooting-grounds of Hitteren were leased by other Englishmen. Years later they came into the hands of a friend and myself, but that is another story. By the kindly but not altogether

gratuitous assistance of Christopher Ström, now long since gathered to his fathers, we secured, a few days after our landing as above described, the lease of an inferior portion of the island some fifteen miles away, in its north-west corner.

I shall not easily forget that first carriole drive across Hitteren. The weather was lovely. The winding switchback road took us through scattered pine-forest, past yellow-green marshes and innumerable lakes, whose varied colours showed brilliantly under a northern summer sun. Gradually we emerged into more open heather-covered ground. I had my gun with me, and walking round a corner uphill, ahead of the carriole, surprised a golden eagle within 40 yards, as he rose from lunching on a dead sheep. A charge of No. 6 shot up the feathers brought him wounded to the ground, and we slew him with a stone. Never before or since have I been so near an eagle, or killed one with a shot-gun. I have since shot one or two specimens of these noble birds—they abound on the island of Hitteren—with a rifle. This particular eagle measured over 8 feet from tip to tip of wings.

About noon we arrived at a farmhouse, where the owners of Hammerstad and Volden farms were awaiting us, and by means of Christopher Ström's eloquence and our *tolk's* interpretation, accompanied by whisky at intervals, successfully negotiated a lease of our first 'deer-forest.'

Six weeks later we started our deer-stalking, which in those days commenced in Hitteren on September 1. The interval we had passed in trout-fishing and ryper-shooting on the mainland.

The so-called 'forest' consisted mainly of open

heather-covered ground, interspersed with rocks, and only boasted one fjeld of any height, the south and west sides of which were covered with dwarf pine-woods, stretching for two or three miles. Here was our only chance of deer, and for some days we only saw a hind or two, and did not get a shot. One morning I spied from the top of this fjeld a small stag and some hinds in the woods 150 yards below, fired several shots with the sporting Snider rifle that I carried, without effect, and returned with Hans, our stalker, to our lodging in the farmhouse, considerably depressed in spirits. Those venison steaks we had promised ourselves seemed farther off than ever. For the next two days we shot ryper along the edge of the fjord, and gave the deer-ground a rest. We then held a council of war with Hans and Edouard, our stalkers, and determined to try the woods again on a method of our own. MacGregor and Edouard went through the thicker wood just under the crest of the high fjeld, while Hans and I took a line a mile to their right, and lower down. A more haphazard, primitive method of 'deer-stalking,' if the term could appropriately be applied to our operation, it would be hard to find. The wind blew direct from my friend to myself, and my line of country was over hillocky, marshy ground, covered with scattered, stunted fir-trees, through which we could here and there see for 100 yards or more. A good deal was obviously left to chance. But it was the unusual that happened. Hans and I had crawled round hillock and through wood and bog for an hour or two, without sight of deer or of fresh tracks, and I had carelessly dropped a few yards to the rear, when Hans, looking round a hillock in front of me, suddenly hissed, in an excited

half-whisper, 'Skut, skut!' (Shoot, shoot!); and there, 40 yards in front of me, trotting gaily through trees and marsh, was an active reddish-brown animal with horns, obviously a stag—the first wild red-deer I had ever seen within point-blank range.

The sporting Snider carbine of thirty years ago was a handy weapon enough for short-range shooting, and as I threw it to my shoulder, drew a bead well forward on the stag, and pressed the trigger, I remember thinking that Hans' advice to 'shoot' was entirely unnecessary. For days past I had been simply spoiling to shoot at anything warrantable covered with hair. The next few moments will never fade from my memory. The stag fell to the shot, which had struck him high on the shoulder and broken his spine. Hans rushed madly forward and plunged his knife into the animal's throat, while I gazed on the deer—a six-point stag—with, for the first time, that feeling of satisfied desire which always follows a hunter's kill, but which, logically, is out of all apparent proportion to the actual object attained.

Only those who have experienced it can realize the strength of this hunter's lust to kill the hunted, though they may find it difficult to explain. It is certain that no race of men possesses this desire more strongly than the Anglo-Saxons of the British Isles, though I have somewhere read that the North American Red Indian chief, now more or less civilized out of existence, and a certain class of Englishmen, have usually possessed two attributes in common—namely, taciturnity under excitement, and a passion for the chase. Let us take it that in our case this passion is an inherited instinct—which civilization

cannot eradicate—of a virile and dominant race, and that it forms a healthy natural antidote to the enervating refinements of modern life.

We had venison steaks for dinner that night, but we saw no more stags on our rented forest of that year. An old yeld hind was the only other deer we killed that season. The suspicion has occasionally crossed my mind that Hans and Edouard were more surprised than ourselves that a decent stag had been found and killed on their ground, which subsequent experience proved to be too open and outlying to harbour good deer. It has since been my fortune to kill many a good stag on other parts of Hitteren, but none of them have given me more pleasure than the first. An examination of the track of the stag and the lie of the ground showed that he had probably been lying down, had winded my friend and his stalker, and had run into my arms as described.

A year or two after we obtained a lease of the Forest of Ström, containing some of the best deer-ground on Hitteren; and as I learnt more of the ground and the conditions of the sport, I was in the habit of constantly stalking alone. Everything then depended on one's own eye, ear, and hand, and the chase thus became all the more enjoyable. On one occasion I remember getting to within 10 feet of a splendid eleven-point stag—one of the best I ever killed on the island—without his being aware of my presence or of what it was that killed him.

It happened thus: In the centre of the island was a large fjeld—Els Fjeld—the western half of which lay in the Forest of Ström. Its steep sides were clothed with pine-woods, interspersed here and there with open glades and rocky dells, watered by trickling

burns. The feeding was good, and these Els Fjeld woods always harboured good stags, and were considered to be among the best of the stalking-grounds of Hitteren. One afternoon I had crossed the open heather-covered top of the fjeld with the intention of stalking back against a favouring wind along the wooded slope of the hill. I was alone. It was one of my earliest efforts at a solitary stalk. Presently I arrived at the edge of the fjeld, whence I could see into the pine-forest below me, and advanced with rifle at the trail in the slow and stealthy conspirator's crawl that is so necessary for successful woodland hunting. In this sort of work, when, owing to the cover and the broken nature of the ground, the deer are usually sighted only when well within shot, it is necessary to have eye and ear alert for first glimpse or sound of deer, to take every advantage of cover, and, as an obvious elementary rule of the game, to advance with noiseless step. A careless slip or a cracking twig has spoilt many a woodland chance, and saved the life of numerous woodland stags. It is, in fact, a highly nervous, jumpy business, in cases where the hunter is keen and the game not too plentiful ; but it possesses withal a peculiar fascination that only those who have experienced it can fully realize.

It is only through constant failures that the difficulties of sighting a woodland stag at close quarters, and before he has seen or heard you, are quite appreciated and to some extent overcome, while thorough knowledge of the ground is an essential condition of success. At best this kind of hunting can never be reduced to an exact science. I have known the most experienced native hunters make frequent mistakes. When luck was against one, everything appeared to

go wrong, and for days together stags might be moved again and again without chance of a shot.

On this particular occasion I experienced the luck of the tyro. I had hardly commenced my homeward stalk, and was still in the open ground above the pine-woods, when in the trees below me, and not 60 yards away, I caught sight of a pair of horns. On the top of one horn I saw three tines in a perfect crown, and therefore knew that the stag that owned them was a fine beast. My heart was in my mouth. I could see nothing to shoot at. Presently the horns slowly lowered and disappeared. The stag was feeding among the trees below a steep ridge. I gradually and cautiously advanced. Again the horns appeared, this time nearer still. The stag was feeding towards me, still under the ridge, while there was nothing vulnerable to aim at, though I was simply itching to shoot. But all the conditions were favourable for me and against the stag. Underfoot I had a moss-grown, grassy hillside, on which an absolutely noiseless advance was possible. A gentle breeze blew direct from the stag, who continued to feed on below me and directly under a steep ridge some 12 feet high.

The game of hide-and-seek went on. I advanced by inches until I could peer over the ridge. There, straight below and within 10 feet of the muzzle of my rifle, was the feeding stag. I could hear him cropping the grass. The next moment a half-inch express bullet (I was shooting that year with a ·500 single Henry rifle) pierced his body from back to breast, and he fell stone-dead in his tracks. This stag weighed 21 stone, and carried a heavy eleven-point head. Never before or since have I approached so near to a live wild red-

deer in his native haunts as I contrived, more by luck than craft, to do on that occasion.

Many years after I achieved a somewhat similar kill, but at longer range. We had been driving some of the Havn woods on Hitteren. A fine stag had been missed, and the party were returning, silent and depressed, direct to the lodge. I had left them for a solitary walk home over Stör Fjeld, one of our favourite stalking-grounds. Stör Fjeld, as its name implies, is a high straight-up-and-down hill, bare on its north side, but clothed with some of the thickest of our island woods on south and east. I climbed up the steep bare shoulder, crossed the top with a good wind, and came out over the thick pine-woods on the south side late in the afternoon. It was ideal stalking-ground, where the broken heather-covered slopes and grassy patches above a thick forest gave good opportunity, if the wind were right, of catching a feeding stag unawares. And, sure enough, the stag was there. Exactly where I hoped to see a deer, in a little grassy hollow above the trees, there I found a fair eight-pointer feeding, 50 yards away. I watched him from behind a convenient ridge, but did not shoot. 'We have plenty of venison at home,' thought I, 'and his head is nothing out of the way. But'—and this was the master-thought—'there might be a better stag farther on,' and in the light of this reflection the eight-point stag became a nuisance. For I had to pass him to reach the shoulder beyond, where a few days before I had spied a good stag with the glass. To pass him meant a long round, and at one point a crawl; but twenty minutes later I had accomplished the task and found myself beyond the stag before I moved him, and with the steep, thickly-

wooded eastern shoulder of the fjeld all undisturbed in front of me. Gradually I advanced, without seeing sign of deer, until I reached the farthest point, where I insinuated myself behind a convenient rock on the crest of the hill and sat down to gaze. The sun was near to setting. Before me, and below for miles around, spread the pine-forests, lakes and marshes of this fair northern land, and far in the distance I could see the smudge of the island Fröyen in the shimmer of the North Sea. It was a lovely evening in September, and the view at all events was worth something, but for the moment there was no sign of the deer-life I had come to seek, and perhaps to take. A passing regret that the eight-pointer had been spared crossed my mind. Presently, glancing downwards through glades of birch and pine, a feeding hind came into sight 200 yards away. The ground, then, was undisturbed: that at all events was satisfactory. I looked yet closer down the steep hillside below me, where little ravines scarred the wooded fjeld. Suddenly a movement through the birch-scrub caught my eye. The next moment I made out a splendid pair of horns, apparently sticking out of the hillside. They were being rubbed against a tree by some invisible agency. My heart began to thump, and I gradually thrust the rifle-barrel over the rock in front of where I sat. The next few seconds seemed hours, but at length a splendid stag followed the horns, and fed out of a hollow about 80 yards straight underneath. For some time I could not see, for intervening birch-trees, that part of his back behind the shoulder that I wanted; but it came into sight at length, for two brief thrilling seconds was aligned on the rifle-barrel, then the sharp crack of the rifle-shot re-echoed

over wood and hill, and fell faintly on the ears of the driving-party just reaching the lodge four miles away, as a signal, as it happened, that a fine eleven-pointer, scaling 19 stone, lay dead in the slopes of Stör Fjeld woods.

It occasionally happens to every sportsman to pull off a long and fluky shot, possibly after a previous miss or two at shorter range. One or two instances of these distinctly satisfactory episodes linger fondly in my memory. In the same Forest of Ström was a thickly-wooded and wide valley called Strömsdalen, surrounded by high fjelds. Two of our party had more than once come across a fine stag, said to be a royal, on the west side of this valley. On the first occasion the unlucky stalker had managed to let off his rifle by mistake just as he sighted the stag. About ten days after, the stag had been seen again near the same spot, and missed, by another of our riflemen. Towards the end of the season it happened to be my turn to take this beat, and we approached this side of the valley with particular care, knowing how old stags constantly frequent the same spot. It was a still, fine day, and in spite of our caution, Eric Ström, our head-stalker, being with me, we moved the stag before seeing him. He was in his old haunts, but had heard us, and I caught sight of him through the trees, making off up the steep hillside above us, about 100 yards away. I fired and missed him, then loaded and missed again, and he disappeared in the cover. Eric shook his head, and we were beginning to look upon it as a lost opportunity, when I caught sight of the stag again, over 250 yards away, on the top of the fjeld, against the skyline and some way to my left—obviously a splendid beast. He stood for a moment

and looked back—a fatal pause, as it happened, for himself. I sat down on a convenient log, and took a last desperate sight full over his shoulder, and pressed the trigger. All I could see was the upper part of his back and his head turned inquiringly in our direction. Through the smoke of the shot—we used 5 drachms of black powder in those days—I fancied I saw him fall, but was not certain. Eric, a little behind and on one side, saw nothing. We clambered slowly up the steep fjeld, not too hopeful of the result, arrived at the spot, and found nothing. Eric looked gloomy. I felt savage and depressed. We hunted for his track along the fjeld, but could not find it. I returned as near as I could to the spot where the stag had last stood, and peered down through the trees into the valley beneath. What was that reddish-brown object 150 yards below? I pointed it out to Eric. We moved a little for a clearer sight, and there, to our delight, lay the stag, stone-dead, at the foot of the steep hillside. The Hitteren natives in those days had hardly realized the powers of modern express rifles, and it was only after we had plunged downhill and examined the dead stag that Eric grasped the fact that only my last lucky shot had struck the deer. It had pierced his head from cheek-bone to eye. He had fallen stone-dead, and rolled from top to bottom of the steep fjeld, fortunately without injuring the fine eleven-point head he carried.

It may be remarked that the three foregoing incidents all relate to stags of eleven points. The number of points might have been varied in one at least of these three incidents, for the sake of artistic effect and to avoid monotony. But as a matter of stern, uncompromising fact all three stags *were* eleven-

pointers. Among the 150 stags or thereabouts that I have killed from first to last on Hitteren were many nine, ten, and eleven-pointers, but only two full royals.

How these lucky shots dwell in one's memory! for they give success and secure a fine trophy at the very moment when failure and disappointment seem to threaten. Let us change the scene to a well-known deer-forest in Inverness-shire, where I had the good fortune some years ago to kill eighteen stags in ten days' stalking, thanks to the kindly hospitality of my friend Colonel W. Walker, M.P. The finest head that I there obtained that season—a splendid royal—was the result of an equally lucky shot. I was shooting with a ·400 double express by Purdey that has been my favourite rifle during recent years for red-deer. The scene was a far-away glen in the wild country bordering on Glen Affaric, where I had been sent to a shepherd's house for a couple of nights by my host to stalk an outlying part of his forest. On the way up the day before I had been lucky enough to get three fair stags, and also to kill a ten-pound salmon in the Beauly River before starting.

It had been a long and exhausting day, and next morning I tried the trout in the neighbouring loch for an hour after breakfast, partly for rest and change of occupation. Alec, the stalker, had been spying the neighbouring hills, and soon came to tell me he had seen a good stag. Away went all thoughts of trout and fishing, and a mile walk brought us within a few hundred yards of the deer. I wanted to put the glass on the stag, but Alec, for reasons of his own, would not have it. The deer were restless, he said, and I was hustled away for the final crawl along a rocky

ridge. Like the serpent on his belly, we approached a hillock over which I could see a fine pair of horns, and whence I meant to take the shot, when, to our horror, there on to the open marsh to our right walked out a hind in full view. We felt somewhat like school-boys caught robbing an orchard. The hind gazed at us for a moment as we lay on the ground for her inspection, then gave a sharp bark and was off. Alec thrust the rifle in my hand. 'Ye'll get the shot, sir, yet, if ye mak' haste,' and I scrambled to the hillock and looked over. There was the stag, 150 yards away, just walking up the ridge, evidently on the point of making off. I took a hurried aim and fired. The stag broke into a gallop and vanished over the ridge. To run to the top of the ridge above me, with a sense of failure and disappointment, to sit down and fire two more shots at the stern of a galloping stag, were my next moves in the game. There was no apparent result. I thrust in two more cartridges. As I did so the stag reached a farther ridge, and, as even the oldest stags will sometimes do, feeling now comparatively safe at a distance of about 300 yards, stood broadside for a moment, luckily apart from the hinds, and gazed back at his foes. This was my first chance at him standing still, and I got a fair steady sight, elbow on knee, high up on his shoulder. As the smoke was clearing the smack of the bullet on living hide came back clearly to our straining ears. The stag plunged forward on to his knees, and Alec sprang to his feet behind me, waved his cap in the air, and exclaimed, 'Now, sir, you've gotten a good head !' We ran over the marsh, arrived breathless at the still plunging stag, whose shoulder was broken high up, and finished him with a shot through

the neck. He carried a splendid royal head, with beautiful tops, one of the best shot in the forest that season. Alec had seen the head through his glass, and had done his best to prevent my doing the same, fearing lest the size and beauty of the stag might give me too strong a dose of 'buck-fever.' But obviously his time had come. Across his breast was a mark like the sear of a hot iron. It was the graze of my first bullet. 'A near shave, that,' remarked Alec. Four inches higher would have meant a clean kill at the first attempt. On such trifling variations of a bullet's flight do success, failure, or additional exciting incidents, depend.

Let us now change the scene again to another far-away Scotch forest in Sutherland, where Ben Loyal raises its head 3,000 feet above the North Sea, and where the breezes from the North Pole blow with untainted freshness across hundreds of miles of ocean. It was the last day of the season. Our limit of twelve stags was short by two. Sandy, the head-stalker, and I were out for the day on the far slopes of Ben Loyal, bent, if possible, on making up our tale. Sandy knew every yard of the ground, and the habits and run of a certain herd of hinds that never left the forest. The value of this knowledge stood us in good stead later in the day. In the morning we had spied a good stag lying down in an open flat, accompanied by a small harem of hinds, but, owing to the unfavourable nature of the ground, could get no nearer than a high ridge nearly 200 yards away. We might, of course, have waited for the stag to rise. But this might mean time we could ill spare, for there was a second stag to be found and killed, if possible. I determined to take the shot. Lying at full length

on the heather behind a rock, I sighted the stag for several moments as he lay at his ease in the flat, unconscious of danger. I was shooting then—it was many years ago—with a double ·500 express which I knew well, and which had no elevating sight. Something had to be allowed for distance, and I hesitated.

'Sandy,' I whispered, 'I don't like the shot as he lies. Can you whistle him up ?'

Sandy nodded and gave a shrill whistle on his fingers. The obliging stag started instantly to his feet. 'It's all of 190 yards, sir,' murmured Sandy as I raised the fore-sight to the top of his shoulder and fired. The stag, a good eight-pointer, ran a few yards and fell dead. It was another lucky day. We subsequently found that the bullet had entered his shoulder at the very lowest point possible for a kill. Three inches lower had been a graze or a miss.

But there was yet a second and last stag of the season to be killed. For several hours that afternoon we walked and spied to no purpose. Evening was drawing on, when over the marsh, at the farthest extremity of our 30,000 acres of forest, we spied a good stag with the Ben Loyal parcel of hinds. Sandy showed signs of annoyance. 'That's a Reay stag, sir, and he's takin' our hinds off the ground.' The deer were feeding slowly across an open marshy flat. Our poaching instincts were thoroughly aroused. 'We must move them out of that, sir,' said Sandy. 'Maybe the hinds will bring him back with them. I know their run.' Accordingly, I fired a long shot—at over 400 yards. The bullet spent itself harmlessly in the heather among the deer. Away they went parallel to our march. 'Follow me, sir, quick,' said Sandy as he grabbed the rifle and started off at a steady trot.

How he managed the successful manœuvre that followed I have never quite clearly understood. Behind us lay the slopes of the forest leading up to the foot of Ben Loyal, and the deer had by this time disappeared round a distant shoulder. The light was getting bad, and I never expected to see the stag again. But fifteen minutes later, after a steady mile trot over heather, bog, and hill, I lay, a panting and dishevelled biped, behind a rock on the reverse of a long slope. We had come to it from one side. It was just possible that the deer might, so Sandy said, come across it from the other. For five minutes or so we lay and got our breath. Every moment's delay increased the possibility of my being able to hold the rifle steady and shoot somewhere near the mark. Suddenly Sandy grew excited. 'Here they come,' he muttered, as the long ears and somewhat ragged form of the leading hind appeared over the skyline above. I crouched behind the rock and watched with still panting breast and wondering gaze as the whole herd of hinds, some twenty in number, trotted slowly down the ridge, and within 30 yards of where I lay. They had come round in a semicircle to their own ground, and we had hit off their line almost too well. Fortunately, the wind was right. They filed slowly by in twos and threes, here and there a calf; and then there came a pause. I had crouched low behind the great boulder. The deer were so close that I hardly dared move my head. Sandy lay behind me, and could see beyond the stone. I heard his whisper, 'He's coming, sir,' and there trotted into view a fine ten-point stag, all dark with peat-bog from his last soiling-pool, lean-flanked, ruffed, the lordly master of the harem who were unwittingly leading him to his

death. He was scarce 30 yards from the muzzle of my rifle, and I could hear his trotting footsteps on the heather. The light was fading, but I saw all I wanted on the fore-sight of my rifle as I pressed. The stag rushed madly up the hill, and 60 yards away fell with a crash, stone-dead. 'Through the heart,' said Sandy. The frightened hinds galloped off to their accustomed haunts under the dark sides of Ben Loyal. So the tale of twelve stags was completed, and we tramped home—ten miles—to the lodge by the sea, light-heartedly, cheerily, with programme carried out and desire attained.

The foregoing are samples of some successful stalking incidents that have fallen to my lot. Failures and mischances are common enough in sport, and I have had my full share of them, when at times nothing seemed to go right. Wind will shift, bullets go astray, or game, perchance, prove undiscoverable or unapproachable. But successful episodes are pleasanter to remember and to recount, and so, while on the subject, I may as well finish up this chapter by relating how I once shot a cock capercaillie, a stag, and a white-tailed eagle with three consecutive shots of a single Henry express rifle, all within the space of ten minutes or less.

It was blowing a gale of wind on the island of Hitteren, and I was out on the far side of Ström with Eric, our chief stalker. We had traversed a long belt of wood without sight or sign of game. The evening was drawing on, and I had begun to look upon it as a blank day, when towards the end of our beat I caught sight of a fine old cock 'caillie on the ground some 60 yards away. The noise of the gale had enabled us to approach unheard. The temptation was not to be

resisted, and the next moment an express bullet laid him out. As I ran forward to pick him up, I became aware of a fine stag, disturbed by the shot, running out of the next glade. He crossed a steep wooded valley to my right, through cover too thick to get a sight, and stood for a moment on the far side, 150 yards away, among the trees, but with head and shoulder then plainly visible. It was a fair chance, but a quick one. I had reloaded as he crossed the valley, and was ready for him. My second bullet struck him fair between neck and shoulder, and he also fell dead within a few yards.

Scene the third and last: Eric was gralloching the stag—a fine twenty-stone nine-pointer, with heavy, rough horns—and I was lighting the pipe of satisfaction, when overhead came sailing a great white-tailed eagle, not 100 yards away. A third and last lucky shot broke his pinion-bone, and, after gyrating wildly in the air, the heavy bird fell head foremost on some rocks among the trees, and we picked him up dead.

On the principle, I suppose, that it never rains but it pours, our chances of sport were not yet exhausted for the day. We were walking home, for once absolutely satisfied with the afternoon's bag. Eric, somewhat bewildered by the rapid sequence of events, was walking ahead of me, carrying the eagle and the 'caillie slung over his shoulder, smiling and muttering to himself, when he suddenly stopped on rounding a hillock, and pointed with his finger. There, not 30 yards distant, stood another fine stag in an opening of the forest, now darkening with the shades of approaching night. He was broadside on, a 'sitting' chance, no doubt as surprised as we were. I threw the rifle to my shoulder, and—saw the end of the

cartridge staring me in the face. In my hasty action the breech-block had fallen. It took but a moment to lower the weapon and replace the block, but that moment was enough. The stag sprang with a bound into the darkening forest and vanished from my ken. The fourth shot was not fired. We consoled ourselves with the thought that the stag already killed was the finer animal of the two.

Eric has now joined the majority, but for many years afterwards whenever we met, which was frequently, he never omitted to recall and to discuss, with increasing gusto, the varied incidents of that lucky afternoon.

CHAPTER II

THE ISLAND OF HITTEREN

In the previous chapter I have said something of my first visit to the island of Hitteren, lying far away north off the coast of Norway near the mouth of the Throndhjem Fjord. That visit took place more than a quarter of a century ago, and the consequence was that then and there I fell in love with Hitteren's pine-woods and marshy glades, with its rocky fjelds, its numerous lakes and streams and trickling burns, its smell of pine and seaweed, its bracing northern air, and, above all, with the sport of hunting its woodland game, and of catching its brown trout, sea-trout, and now and then an odd grilse. I have off and on since visited the island, generally in August and September, through a course of some thirty years, and naturally entertain pleasing recollections of the wild sport it has afforded my friends and myself.

It may naturally be asked, Why is Hitteren the only place in Norway worthy the name of deer-forest, so far as red-deer are concerned? This is the fact as my knowledge goes. There are many other islands in the Throndhjem district, near the Namsen, in the Hardanger, and elsewhere on the western coast, as well as portions of the

mainland, almost, if not quite, as well suited in climate, area, locality, and vegetation, to shelter and feed a good stock of deer. I believe the chief reason for this singularity is the fact that Hitteren is the only spot where protective laws have been thoroughly well observed as well as passed. The island was discovered by Englishmen a generation ago, and has been more or less leased by them ever since, partly owing to its accessibility. The native owners thus came early to recognise the commercial value of their sporting rights, and have done their best in consequence to maintain the character and value of these rights, which now form their most valuable asset.

At one time, for fifteen years or so—from about the year 1886, if my recollection serves me right—hinds were strictly protected in the Throndhjem district, which includes Hitteren, and also a considerable stretch of mainland opposite, not only *de jure*, but also *de facto;* with the consequence that the stock of deer increased considerably. Quite recently, in 1902, the Norwegian game laws were again altered, and now hinds as well as stags are allowed to be killed in equal proportions up to the legal limit on each farm.

From a sporting point of view, I consider this to have been a mistake. On the small outlying farms, where the woodland cover is sparse and scattered, stags are seldom seen. On such places hinds only are killed by the native owners, and their arithmetic is generally faulty when it comes to giving a return of the number of animals slain. They were after the venison and, failing stags, the hinds just had to take their chance.

Fortunately for Hitteren, all the best ground is now in one hand, being leased by my friend J. A.

Thomas, who took over the lease of the Havn and Aune forest after my co-lessee and old friend E. M. Denny and myself had relinquished it in 1900, and he now holds it in conjunction with his own forest of Ström. Being a good sportsman who only kills warrantable stags, the hinds continue to be preserved, all Norwegian game laws notwithstanding, and the island still contains, in consequence, an excellent stock of deer.

Hitteren also possesses some special advantages in locality and climate, which may have something to do with its sporting superiority, but these are not sufficiently marked to form the chief factor in the case, so far as regards the western islands. The severity of the winters on the mainland, coupled with the size and density of its forests, are, perhaps, sufficient to account for the difficulty of finding red-deer in, for example, such places as the Throndhjem district, opposite Hitteren.

I have visited this district and seen deer-sign, and on one occasion I shot a fine stag there, of which more is told in a later chapter. The Hitteren deer come and go from this locality. On another occasion I spent a week on the shores of the Hardanger in search of red-deer. We again saw deer-sign, and a fine stag was seen by one of the party who had no rifle. We were also shown some good shed horns, one or two being royal, picked up during the past few years. In a bloodthirsty mood, after several blank days, I there shot an enormous yeld hind, the only deer I personally saw. Army rifles, I am told, are now cheap and plentiful in the Hardanger. Both the above localities are useless for all practical purposes of deer-stalking, the size and roughness of the

country, and the density of its cover, being out of all proportion to the stock of deer.

But take such an island as Tusteren, close to Christiansund, which certainly ought to be as good for deer as Hitteren. I have known of splendid stags being killed on this island. In 1882 I shot a stag there that weighed over 30 stone. But the stock of deer now on it, and on Stabben, its neighbour, is, I believe, hardly worth mentioning. Yet it possesses all the natural characteristics of a perfect little deer-forest. Its area is over 50,000 acres. High peaks and succulent mountain grasses, dense forests of pine and birch interspersed with lake and stream, sheltered glens and corries, and good meadow and marsh feeding, are all to be found on Tusteren, combined with close proximity to the mainland, where the roving stag can find all the summer range he can possibly desire. The hostile factor in the case is—I speak confidentially—the strongly-developed poaching instincts of its inhabitants. An absolutely close time for Tusteren has more than once been enacted by law, with a view of getting up its stock of deer. I believe such an enactment still exists. But venison has a ready market in Christiansund and Throndhjem, and no questions asked. It is also a valuable article of winter diet at home ; while the inhabitants of Tusteren have long possessed the cheap rifles already mentioned, along with a thorough knowledge of moving deer to passes. Some of them are good poaching stalkers and fair shots, and, when in want of meat, not in the least particular as to the age or sex of the deer. My readers can draw their own inference.

Moreover, all Norwegian farmers have 'corn rights,' which in Hitteren we were careful to buy

up. These rights enable deer to be shot in the corn, close season or not; and many a breeding hind and lordly stag, with horns half grown, have perished, not only inside, but also outside the corn-fence during the long Norwegian early-summer evenings or at dawn. It remains for some English or Norske millionaire to buy up and depopulate the island of Tusteren in order to turn it into a perfect and most sporting natural deer-forest.

During all my years of Hitteren experience there have been sporting vicissitudes, of course. In 1872 and for some years after the deer were not too plentiful. In those days hinds could be killed as well as stags; and on outlying parts of the island, such as my friend Alexander MacGregor and myself rented on our first visit, and where I had killed my first stag, a season's bag of two or three deer was all that could be expected. Then, again, the 'paper' rights—rented from the farmers—in many cases far more than accurately represented the actual possibilities of the sport to be obtained. Each farm had originally the legal right from the Crown to kill two, or perhaps four, deer, according to the size of the ground. The ground itself might not be good for a single decent stag, yet the rights might be sold by the canny owner to some unwary sportsman for their imaginary paper worth. These farms, again, could be subdivided by each respective owner among his family, or a portion sold, and each sale or subdivision operated to double, or even treble, as the case might be, the paper deer rights. Under this illogical system many inferior farms had more deer rights than other larger and far more sporting properties that had continued to be held without sale or subdivision in original ownership.

The paper rights, therefore, did not necessarily bear their proper relation to the actual sporting value of Hitteren farms.

In that year of our first visit (1872) Hitteren was full of English sportsmen. The best forest on the south-east side, opposite the mainland, known as the Havn and Aune ground, was then rented by 'Sixty-one'—a well-known veteran Anglo-Norwegian sportsman and former correspondent of the *Field* newspaper—who was out that year with an equally veteran friend. Marching with Havn Forest on the north was the smaller farm or 'forest' of Kaldkloven, then owned by Captain W. Congreve, Chief Constable of Stafford, who was also out with a party, and with whom I then commenced a friendship that lasted for many subsequent years, until his death in 1899. Kaldkloven was comparatively small in extent, but possessed some excellent well-wooded deer-ground; and it also contained some of the best sea-trout-fishing in the island, in a chain of lakes connected by a small river with the fjord. On the west of Havn Forest marched the Forest of Ström, facing the North Sea, the next best stalking-ground to that of Havn and Aune. This forest was tenanted that same year by the well-known sportsman and big-game hunter, E. N. Buxton, whom I then had the pleasure of meeting for the first time. With him were Andrew Johnston and his wife, also Bertram Buxton, his cousin—whom I accompanied later that autumn reindeer-stalking on the Dovre Fjeld—and Dr. Jex Blake and his daughter.

The only remaining Hitteren forest worthy of the name was the extreme south-west portion, then tenanted by General Blackwell and F. Pigou, separated from the other forests I have mentioned by a piece of

flat, open, boggy country, about ten miles in width, that extended clear across the island from shore to shore. On the flat, as it was termed, deer were seldom seen or shot, so far as my experience went, though the natives always insisted that good stags constantly frequented it.

Such, then, was our Anglo-Norwegian party in those days of long ago. Sport, I remember, was not very good in that year of 1872, E. N. Buxton in particular being somewhat disappointed with this his first—and last—experience of the island. He and his party got two or three stags of moderate size only. Later on I met him in Havn, where we had all foregathered at the end of September to wait for the steamer for Hull. Christopher Ström's house, on the edge of Havn Bay—the only available resting-house—was crammed on that occasion with the parties I have mentioned, waiting for three days for the steamer to take us all back to Hull—three days during which, as I well remember, we nearly ate 'Sixty-one' and his old companion out of house and home. The steamer was late, of course; and in that bracing northern air a crowd of hungry hunters imposed a heavy strain on Christopher's menage. We were all doubtless dismissed with heartfelt blessings.

But I well remember meeting E. N. Buxton, as I have said, as I drove my carriole down the last steep hill overlooking Havn Bay. He had just returned from an expedition on the mainland, and was coming up the hill to spy for the steamer's smoke on the far horizon.

'What sport?' was my greeting.

'I've shot a bear,' was the reply, on which I heartily congratulated him.

It is not everyone who has shot a Norwegian bear. The mainland opposite Hitteren was mountainous and thickly wooded, and though bears were constantly heard of therein, and were apparently fond of killing stray Norwegian stock, the difficulty always was for the hunter to find them. Many a long day's tramp I subsequently had in this rough country in the vain pursuit of this elusive game, and this during the most active period of my youthful manhood. Walk and spy and hunt as I would o'er mainland hill and dale in Throndhjem's Amt, I only once in the far distance saw a bear; but neither then nor at any other time did I ever get a shot at this species of Norway big-game. Buxton had been more fortunate.

'How did you get him?' I asked.

It turned out that he had spied Bruin in the early dawn on an open hillside in a perfectly orthodox, scientific, Scotch deer-stalker's fashion, and then accomplished a successful approach and kill.

Two days later MacGregor and all the rest of them embarked on the steamer for Hull, leaving 'Sixty-one' in peace at Havn, while Bertram Buxton and I left in a coaster for Throndhjem *en route* for the Dovre Fjeld, where we hoped to get a chance at the wild reindeer. I had arranged at the last moment to accept his kind offer to share in the trip, the incidents of which I refer to in a subsequent chapter.

From 1873 to 1876 I continued my visits to Norway without a break, generally during the months of July, August, and September. In 1873 we—MacGregor and myself, with two friends—leased the Quaale beat of the Orkla River, and had excellent sport in that and following years with Orkla salmon. On Hitteren we had obtained the lease of the Ström Forest, the

next best stalking-ground to Havn and Aune; and we generally migrated there from the Orkla in the first week of August for some ryper-shooting before the stalking season commenced. The open season for deer—regulated in Norway by Norske 'House of Commons' law—extended in those years from September 1 to October 10. This open season was subsequently extended in the eighties by a fortnight, commencing August 15, and terminating, as before, October 10. Quite recently the open season for deer has again been altered by legislation, and, while commencing still on August 15, extends only to September 30, thus depriving the sportsman of the best ten days of the rutting season, when the stags are belling, and when in a woodland country the most favourable opportunity occurs to find and kill the master stags. One effect of this change is to reduce to some extent the value of Hitteren deer-forests from a sportsman's point of view.

Twenty years ago there were a fair number of ryper, the Norwegian variety of the red-grouse, as well as blackgame, on the outlying and more open heather-covered parts of Hitteren. We still retained our original lease of the Hammerstad and Volden farms, marching with the Ström Forest on the north-east, and during August had fair sport ryper-shooting. The regulations affecting the importation of dogs into Norway had not then come into force, and we were free to take out such sporting dogs as we chose without restriction. For several seasons my favourite ryper dog was a brown Irish water-spaniel named Floe. Her nose was quite first-rate, though her education was defective. The chief difficulty attending ryper-shooting in Norway during August was to find

the birds and make them rise. The cover was rough and thick, and ryper—even in those unsophisticated days, when the Norwegian native had not obtained the present cheap and plentiful supply of breech-loading, gas-pipe shot-guns, and when snaring in winter and spring was not quite the fine art it has since become—were not too plentiful, and early in the season were difficult to find. It was distinctly a young man's sport, with plenty of rough walking for a moderate amount of shooting. But with the aid of Floe's activity and good nose we often obtained a ten to fifteen brace bag, with an occasional woodcock and snipe, and a blackcock or two thrown in by way of variety. Floe's chief idiosyncrasies were to run into her game, and sometimes hurriedly to devour a dead bird when she thought no one was looking.

The best Hitteren dog I ever shot over was a large and powerful setter named Bismarck, the property of my old friend Captain Congreve, the owner of the Hitteren shooting of Kaldkloven. In later years I had the use of Bismarck for one or two seasons, and his steadiness and unerring sagacity were a pleasure and delight to the sportsman. If he found birds away out of sight in rough and, perhaps, wooded ground, he would after a time come back quietly from the point, and, in his own unmistakable manner, inform the man with the gun and lead him back to the birds. I can well believe that some of these quadrupeds, our faithful sporting companions, possess a faculty akin to reason.

We occasionally, later in the season, tried walking in line for Hitteren grouse and blackgame, a method that can best be described as 'vanity and vexation of spirit.' It generally led to much irritation and un-

parliamentary language, mainly because no three or four guns could ever keep a line in the rough, up-and-down, here-and-there-wooded grouse-ground of Hitteren. They usually lost one another in the first mile, and returned home in separate and independent consignments. A strong, indefatigable and steady dog, with good nose and quiet ways, is absolutely indispensable for enjoyable grouse-shooting in the rough cover of Norway island shooting-grounds. Some of the Norway mainland fjelds afford, or, rather, used to afford, better and more Scotch-moor-like sport. On the fjelds of the Throndhjem Amt, for example, I have occasionally, with a friend, obtained twenty-five-brace bags of ryper over somewhat inferior dogs. But there was always a 2,000 to 3,000 feet climb to start with from one's house in the valley below to the high fjeld above. So far as my experience goes, grouse-shooting in Norway is not now so good as formerly. Natives shoot more and snare more. The market for grouse has been made more available, and therefore better, by improved means of railway and steamer transit and carriage, and shooting and snaring is thus a better business for the native, with the obvious necessary consequence of less amusement for the sportsman than previously.

The recent Norwegian game legislation makes it a little more difficult for the casual native either to snare or shoot on another man's ground, and may have beneficial results in the course of years. The rights of sporting ownership have been more clearly defined, and in this respect the recent enactment is, I believe, a good one.

Another element of uncertainty in Norwegian grouse and blackgame shooting is the migratory or

wandering tendency of the birds. Both ryper and blackgame constantly change their ground in Norway. Blackgame migrate, in some autumns, in large numbers from the mainland to Hitteren, for example. I have known certain fjelds on the mainland very good for ryper some seasons, and almost bare of birds the following season. Natives have told me that large flocks of ryper have often been known to migrate long distances in autumn and winter—to gather together and suddenly fly off into space, so to speak, and disappear for reasons best known to themselves. There may be, perchance, some influence of a restless and disturbing kind in the bracing Northern climate of Scandinavia, which begets these migratory characteristics in its wild-game.

During those first four seasons I killed some good stags in Hitteren, and made some life-long sporting friendships. Towards the end of September we used to foregather, as I have said, at Havn, in Christopher Ström's well-known house by the fjord, to wait for the coasting steamer to take us south *en route* for Hull and home. The old *Tasso* did not run to and from Throndhjem and Hull in those days so late in the season, and we had to make our way south to Christiansund or Christiania as best we might by some Norwegian coaster that was never, in late autumn, within days of her scheduled time.

In 1876 I was alone on Ström Forest for a fortnight or so, and had enjoyed unusually good sport with the deer. I had also that year leased the farm of Sanstad, close to Havn on the east, and used to vary my time and my stalking between Ström and Havn, from which latter place Sanstad was reached. Robert Staples, of Dunmore, Queen's County, Ireland, a fine

old Irish sportsman and keen stalker and shot, was then at Havn with his son, who was also a keen and enthusiastic sportsman, and many a pleasant evening we passed together at Havn comparing notes and exchanging yarns about Scotch and Norway sport. Both Staples, father and son, have now joined the great majority, but for some years we were habitués of Hitteren together, along with John de Grey, a well-known Anglo-Norwegian sportsman, and a subsequent partner of R. Staples junior, in the lease of Havn and Aune Forest.

But of that year 1876. How the incidents of the death of each noble stag dwell in one's memory ! I came down to Havn that October with a particularly good lot of heads. There was one wide and heavy twelve-pointer, for example, one of the very few twelve-pointers I have shot on Hitteren. I had obtained him in a somewhat sudden and unexpected manner, without a legitimate and orthodox spy and stalk. Eric, my hunter, and I had gone up to a hut on the far side of the forest, bordering on the great Aune flat, about the 1st of October, and during an early morning stalk we happened on a small stag on the very march. He came running out of a thickly-wooded glen as if the 'old gentleman' was after him, and ran almost into our arms. I spared him, in compassion for his youth and innocence, let us say. This way of putting it is more flattering to one's virtue than bluntly to explain that he carried a small six-point head that I did not covet. But the inference from his hasty movements was clear. He had no doubt tried a flirtation with some of the members of a hind harem down the glen, and been ignominiously driven out of that by some larger stag who was boss

of the show. We went home to breakfast determined to prosecute our search a little further in the same direction in the afternoon.

Late that same evening we—Eric and I—were creeping quietly down the edge of the glen close to our march, on the look-out for something worth the shot. Not a sight or sign of deer had we seen for two long hours, and I had begun to think the ground was blank, and had carelessly dropped a few paces to the rear, when Eric, in front, suddenly crouched and turned to stone. As I followed his example, there, on a wooded ridge above us, came daintily stepping a hind through the scattered cover of birch and fir. She had not seen us, and the wind was right. Then came another hind and calf, and yet another. Clearly it was some four-footed, ruffed and tined pasha's harem. After what seemed to us an endless pause, as we crouched in eager but undignified fashion in heathery bog, yet another movement of dark-red body became apparent among the trees, and then, a few paces behind the hinds, stepped forth into view a great stag, dark with peat-bog from his last soiling-pool, splendidly ruffed, and carrying a wide and heavy head. 'Skut, skut!' hissed Eric, in most unnecessary haste, for the stag was not 80 yards away, and my main difficulty was to control a too hasty desire to loose off my rifle. It was one of those sitting chances occasionally missed by the tyro, simply because it looks so easy that proper aim is not taken. But I had already served a few years' apprenticeship in Hitteren woods, and took pains to shift my attitude and take a steady sight, quickly no doubt, but not too quick, before the finger crooked on trigger. Following the roar of my

·500 Henry express, the stag, shot through the heart, plunged madly down the brae towards us, and the next moment fell dead almost at our feet as we ran forward. He carried one of the finest heads of my collection, a twelve-pointer, but not a royal, for the tops were not properly cupped, while a separate third horn, or single point, grew out of the forehead just below the burr of the main antler.

We sportsmen of Hitteren were as jealous of one another's trophies in those days as young mothers of their respective first offspring, and my heart grew light as I gazed at the stag at my feet. 'That's a head will take a lot of beating,' thought I, as our approaching gathering at Havn and comparing of the season's trophies came to my mind. But I was destined to be disappointed, as will shortly be related. Besides this particular head, I had some very good ten and eleven pointers already secured that season, and I felt fairly confident of making a good show among my brothers of the rifle. One in particular, a very heavy ten-pointer, came from the little island of Helgebostad, at the mouth of the Ström Fjord. This island, perhaps a mile in diameter, was for the most part densely covered with birch-wood, and stalking there was a very chancy and almost impossible business. So once a week we used to drive it, and at first the stags invariably went wrong. Their ideas of the route to take when disturbed by Eric and his men differed radically from our own.

On the occasion of the last failure I had gone back with Eric after the drive and tracked a very heavy stag, and thus ascertained that he had broken back over the open centre of the island while we had vainly waited for him in the thick woods by the sea. On

the next and last visit to Helgebostad I stationed myself behind a convenient rock in the centre of the island, with an open bog behind me and another open, heathery space of hillside in front. All round, in a great semicircle, were the dense birch-woods the men were quietly walking through. The drive progressed, and not a deer did I see for an hour or more. Presently Eric appeared on the far horizon, beyond the immediate open hillside in front. The drive was nearly over, and I thought the big stag whose tracks I had previously seen must again have gone wrong. Then a stray hind ran out of the woods in front of Eric and made a détour past him and back to the cover that had been driven. Then to my ears, as I sat disconsolate, came the unmistakable welcome sound of a heavy deer stepping through wet marsh. It was *behind* me. I turned in time to see a splendid stag quietly making his way over the bog behind, and not 100 yards distant, to the thick woods on the other side of the island. This crafty old stager had doubled back past the drivers, and was crossing to the thick cover near where the drive had started. We had fairly outwitted him, as much by luck as good management, for I expected and had laid plans for him in front of me, and not behind. He never reached his point, for the next moment a half-inch leaden expanding bullet finished his career. He proved to be a twenty-five-stone stag, with a very heavy ten-point head.

The heads of the two stags whose killing is above described were among the trophies I took back with me to Havn a week or so later, vainly thinking that one, at least, would prove the master Hitteren head of that year. In the hall of the Hotel Christopher I

met Staples and his father. 'There's a pirate on the island,' was the remark with which I was greeted.

At a cheery dinner that evening the statement was more fully explained. It appeared that the lessees of the shooting on the far south-west corner of Hitteren had gone home early, and had given leave to a certain naval Captain to shoot their forest, on which the deer that year were scarce. This forest marched at one end with the best of the Aune ground, whereon our aforesaid naval Captain had, according to Staples, freely encroached; being carried away, of course, by the ardour of sport, and, as a stranger to the island, not knowing the marches too well.

The 'pirate' proved to be Captain—now Admiral Sir William—Kennedy, R.N., that well-known good sportsman, and author of 'Hurrah for the Life of a Sailor!' We met him in the flesh an hour or two later, and on the voyage home together that year I had the pleasure of commencing with him what has proved to be a long and lasting friendship.

Kennedy arrived late that same evening at Havn by open boat from beyond Aune, and he came not empty-handed. Among his impedimenta there loomed large a very fine and long eleven-point head, with the heaviest cups or crowns I have ever seen on any Hitteren head. This proved to be the master head of the season, and wanted but one bay tine to be a full royal. The head itself was wrapped up in blood-stained sacking, had obviously been killed that day, and the vague accounts of exactly where it had been found and stalked we could only charitably ascribe to the 'pirate's' want of previous knowledge of Hitteren topography. But Kennedy was our 'stable' companion during the subsequent voyage home, and this

cheery British sailor could no longer refrain *en route* from 'making a clean breast of it.'

The kill had happened thus: On his way by open boat to Havn that afternoon he heard a good stag belling in the Balsness woods, and had promptly landed with Brettel Ström, one of the wiliest and most accomplished of Hitteren stalkers, to see what the beast was like. It was practically the last day of the season, and no man's sport would be interfered with. Brettel could imitate a stag's bellicose roar to perfection. The stag in question was the big Balsness stag, the undisputed master of that part of the forest, and on hearing Brettel's counterfeit challenge promptly rushed up to drive away the fancied rival stag that he supposed was daring to poach in his domain. The 'pirate' was the last man in the world to allow such a chance to slip. The master stag of Balsness rushed upon his fate; was promptly shot; decapitated; the head wrapped up and taken back by the marauders to their boat; and the journey to Havn resumed as if nothing had happened. This eleven-pointer, thus secured, proved the best Hitteren trophy of the year.

Next to it came a very long ten-pointer, killed by Staples junior on the far Aune ground a week previously—a head that in length and beam I have never known beaten, or even equalled, among Norwegian red-deer heads; and third only came my twelve-pointer, that in any ordinary year would have been the best.

There were two other incidents of that year's sport that remain fresh in my mind. They should have added two additional fine heads to the trophies I took down to Havn, but, as a matter of fact, only resulted

in the disappointment, temporary no doubt, a modicum of which is necessary to give added zest and flavour to all forms of wild shooting.

Incident number one was my first experience of a deer-drive on Hitteren. I was out on Els Fjeld, our favourite stalking-ground on the Ström Forest, with a dried-up old Norske hunter named Gabriel Aune, one of our staff, who was well up in all the arts and tricks of our island hunting. We had crept for a mile or more along the steep wooded sides of the fjeld, and seen no deer. The afternoon was getting late. We had come out on the higher fjeld, where the pine-cover ran up into little stunted fir-woods nestling in steep-sided upland valleys. I was thinking that the day's sport was over, when Gabriel, after examining the ground, remarked, 'Skal ve har en leeten klap jagt?' (Shall we have a little drive?). I assented readily enough, and he accordingly placed me behind a large rock on an open hillside, and himself disappeared round the shoulder of the higher open fjeld on my left. He had previously explained to me the plan of campaign, and had doubtless tried the game before in the days when Hitteren natives killed their own deer. This happened to be a favourite spot for a drive.

In front of my post was open fjeld for some 300 yards, across which ran a steep gully, and beyond was a thick wood of stunted fir and birch at the head of a steep-sided valley, a favourite resort for good stags. With a suitable wind the drive was almost a certainty for a shot, provided, of course, that the stag was there. The driver could reach the far side of the wood by going round a steep hill, and there was no more convenient way for a stag to run, if he happened

to be harbouring in the wood, than past the big rock behind which I was posted.

As it happened, a very fine stag was at home in this particular wood that day. Within half an hour of Gabriel's departure I saw the stag—a splendid beast—gallop out of the cover in front of me, straight towards my post, and then disappear into the steep gully between us. He was obviously in a desperate hurry, having no doubt got Gabriel's wind.

Then, in my youthful inexperience, I did an unwise thing. I left my post and ran towards him, being afraid he might turn down the steep hill into the thick pine-woods below and to my right. As I advanced, his head and horns appeared for a moment looking at me 50 yards away, and then disappeared again, apparently going to the right and downhill. I ran in that direction, came to the edge of the gully, and at first saw no stag. He had apparently vanished.

Then, hearing a slight noise, I looked to the left, and saw the stag running hard in the other direction. He had doubled in his tracks when out of sight, and was now 150 yards away, making for the higher fjeld. Instead of the sitting chance he would have given had I been content to wait in my post, the shot was now no easy one, and I missed him clean. The fine head that I saw he carried over the far skyline caused me many a subsequent pang of deep regret. The moral of the incident clearly was, Be careful how you leave your post in a drive.

Incident number two was of a different kind, and, as a matter of fact, I eventually obtained the head of the stag in question.

I was out alone for an early morning stalk on the Sanstad beat, near Havn, not many days before the

end of the season. A heavy stag had recently been seen on the ground, probably an autumn visitor from the mainland, and I was after him. As it happened, on coming round a knoll on comparatively level ground, in the early morning, and not an hour after I had left the house, I came in sight of a parcel of hinds feeding in an open marsh. With them was a heavy stag, big-bodied, ruffed, a lordly master, evidently the stag I was looking for. The deer had not seen me, were not 400 yards away; the wind was right. It looked as near a certainty for a successful stalk as anything in the way of deer-stalking can be.

I spent a few moments in examining the stag through my glass, and saw that he carried an exceptionally heavy ten-point head; then laid my plans for an approach, and proceeded to put them into execution. By making a détour of half a mile and then a crawl of 100 yards, I hoped to get within easy range.

All went well for a time. The final crawl over a bog was in progress. Just over a brow in front of me the deer were calmly feeding in the open flat. I had reached the point of marking a tuft of heather a few yards ahead of me whence I could take the shot, when I heard the rasping bark of a hind on my left. There was a wooded knoll, round which I had come in my détour, on the brow of which a solitary hind, apart from the rest, had been all the time feeding among a few small trees. She was invisible from where I had first seen the deer, and had only come into sight during my final crawl, when my eyes and thoughts were solely intent on the deer in front.

This objectionable hind had seen me, of course, had then promptly sounded the danger-signal, and away at a gallop went the hinds and the stag in front.

I had time for two shots at the stag, at 150 yards, as he crossed the marsh and then disappeared, with his harem, over the brow beyond. I remember noticing that he gave a distinct apparent slip at the first shot, but he was going very strong as he disappeared. I followed his tracks for a few hundred yards, saw no sign of blood, concluded I had made a clean miss, and returned home in disappointment, with vengeful feelings against one particular hind.

As a matter of fact, the stag was subsequently found dead within a few hundred yards of where I had left his trail, and the head was sent home after me. I must have shot him through the flank as he ran away, the bullet ranging forward into his vitals.

From this incident I learnt two valuable lessons: first, to thoroughly spy the ground before making the final approach; second, to follow the track of a stag that has been fired at until it is certain he is not hit.

We discussed all these various stalking episodes on the way home across the North Sea with that friendly good-fellowship that is half the charm of wild Scandinavian sport.

After 1876 a somewhat lengthy hiatus occurred in my shooting trips across the North Sea. In 1877 and following years I went further afield, and it was not until 1888 that I again leased a Hitteren forest, though I paid the island a flying visit in 1882. But in that year (1888) an opportunity occurred of securing the best forest on the island, the Havn and Aune grounds already mentioned, and a ten years' lease was accordingly then obtained by E. M. Denny and myself. This forest comprised 60,000 acres in its central and southern portion, containing the thickest woods, the highest fjelds, and the largest number of deer among

Some Trophies obtained by the Author in 1876-77-78.

(Red-deer from Hitteren, Norway. Buffalo, Wapiti, Grizzly-bear, Ovis-Montana (Bighorn). Blacktail-deer and Antelope from the Rockies).

all the shootings of the island. One of its advantages was its proximity to the mainland, whence across a mile of fjord came and went some of our largest stags for that range from winter to summer feed that is so necessary in order to maintain the quality and vigour of the stock.

We usually killed about a stag a day to the party. In the autumn of 1895 our party of four rifles for a fortnight, and the writer alone for another fortnight, killed twenty-eight stags in twenty-seven days, partly stalking and partly driving. Several of the stags weighed over 20 stone, and one scaled no less than 386 pounds (27 stone 12 pounds) clean, as brought in next day from the fjeld. His dimensions, which I took at the time, were as follows:

Height: From top of shoulder to centre of fore-hoof - - -	4 feet 3 inches.
Girth: Behind shoulder - -	4 feet 6 inches.
Length: From centre of forehead (base of horns) along back to tip of tail - - - - -	6 feet 4 inches.

This is the heaviest stag I have known killed on the island. Hitteren heads are somewhat irregular in number of tines, being in this respect rather inferior to Scotch heads. We have killed many twenty-stone stags with heads of from seven to eleven points, and in some cases with switch horns, such stags, as all stalkers know, being often the heaviest beasts. Twice only, in an experience extending over thirty years, have I killed or seen killed a full Hitteren royal, though I have been shown one or two fine royal heads shot elsewhere on the island. On our forest ten and eleven pointers have been fairly common. In beam and roughness of horn Hitteren heads are usually superior to Scotch.

Hitteren stalking, as has doubtless been gathered by my readers from the incidents already described, is a somewhat different art from that of Scotland. In the first place it is woodland stalking, though occasionally I have enjoyed a stalk, after a spy a mile or so away, equal in duration, exercise, and excitement to anything that can be obtained in Glen Affaric, Athol, or Reay. Is it presumptuous here to remind the modern Scotch stalker that the red-deer is, the world over, by nature a woodland deer ? The open deer-forest of Scotland, supplying though it does a manly, exhilarating and often arduous form of sport, is, strictly speaking, an artificial creation. The Scotch deer do not, as a rule, frequent woods, because the old pine-forests of Scotland have been mostly destroyed, and there are, generally speaking, no woods for them to frequent. Where woods of birch and pine still exist, in or near Scotch forests, in those woods will always be found for a good part of the year the largest, the heaviest, and the best-conditioned stags.

Some correspondence at one time appeared in the *Field* on the subject of the decadence of Scotch heads. Whilst many causes may have combined to bring about this degeneracy of the modern Scotch red-deer head, as compared with the noble antlers of a century or so ago, on all or any of which causes I should be sorry to dogmatize, yet I may in this connection venture to assert that in the change from woodland to open forest is to be found one great reason for the degeneracy of the modern wire-fenced, hay-in-winter-fed animal. Increase of numbers under artificial conditions, combined with restricted range, have no doubt told their tale ; but deprive an animal,

intended by Nature to harmonize with and shelter in a woodland country, of his natural environment, and drive him perforce to the open hillside, where he can be constantly spied, harassed, and kept on the move, and where, moreover, the finest stag can always be picked out and marked down for slaughter, and you at once establish artificial conditions under which, it seems to me, the deer is bound to degenerate both in quality and size. As an instance of their natural liking for woodland country, the recent importation of red-deer into New Zealand may be mentioned. We are told that they have there at once taken naturally to the woods, and are growing splendid antlers.

Wood-crawling, then, is the chief characteristic of Hitteren stalking, and if one of the features of true sport is to outwit and slay a wild animal in its natural home, then the stalking of which I write is sport of the truest and most genuine kind. There is also this additional inducement that, in order to be thoroughly enjoyed and made the most of, it should be undertaken alone ; or the sportsman should at all events be master of the stalk, and, the deer once found, far or near, approach and shoot on his own responsibility, and not, like an obedient dog, crawl, ignorant of the science of the stalk, and the why and the wherefore of its details, at the heels of a professional native. Better far to bungle a few stalks and crawls on your own account, and learn, by wholesome experience and a far-in-the-distance vanishing royal, to appreciate and overcome the practical difficulties of the sport, than to be brought, automaton-like, within easy shot by a paid expert. Success in the former case is ten times sweeter when it comes.

There are at least two good reasons why the amateur Hitteren stalker should, after he has acquired some knowledge of the ground, go alone. First, because a really scientific native stalker is the exception rather than the rule, and, secondly, because two men crawling like conspirators through wood and glen in search of a warrantable stag make double the noise of one, and the aforesaid stag is so much the less likely to be seen, or, if caught a glimpse of, to afford opportunity for a shot.

From early dawn until 9 a.m., and from 4 p.m. or so until dusk, are the proper times to find and kill a Hitteren stag. No one who has not tried it can realize the futility, as I may call it, of endeavouring to find and kill a woodland stag when couched. He usually lies throughout the day—and the better the stag the more certain the rule—wherever possible between two winds, with a good view to leeward, at times chewing the cud, and with eye, ear, and nostril alive to every hostile approach or unusual sound. The odds are then all in his favour, and an inexperienced sportsman might walk through Hitteren woods for hours in the day without seeing a single deer, or knowing how many had seen, heard, or winded him, and departed unobserved. The yellow-brown body harmonizes so exactly with pine-trees, yellow marsh, and purple heather, that, even when on the move and feeding, the deer is not so easily picked up, and when couched the difficulty is tenfold increased.

I once happened to get my glass on a good stag as he stood on a wooded hill not half a mile away. As I watched him, he lay down. My companion, an experienced native with a keener and longer sight than mine, not having seen him as he stood,

was unable to pick him up, even with the glass, and doubted his existence until I propped my binocular on a stone, with the stag in the centre of the focus, and so enabled the man to see the exact spot. Some good sportsmen of my acquaintance, accustomed to Scotch stalking, have been occasionally disappointed in Hitteren sport, owing to this difficulty, where luck was against them, of finding good stags in such an up-and-down woodland country. The element of chance naturally plays a large part in woodland sport, as in some other affairs of life. We cannot reduce the pursuit of woodland game to an exact science, and probably would not if we could.

Some days everything goes right, as on other days all goes wrong. My first shot on Hitteren, with a twelve-bore gun and charge of No. 6 shot, brought down a magnificent golden eagle that, on our coming round a corner of the road, rose within point-blank range.

Never since have I been so near an eagle, although these fine birds abound on the island, where I once saw eight of them, at a distance, sitting on one rock. Walking carelessly through Hitteren woods, I have occasionally and by chance jumped and killed a stag, when a strong wind and the nature of the ground happened to lend itself to the operation, after having, perhaps for days before, stalked favourite glens and corries without the chance of a shot. Twice have good stags been driven into my arms, so to speak, unwittingly by a comrade—without having been seen by him—when he and I were stalking neighbouring beats.

On one of these occasions a friend was stalking along the side of our highest fjeld, a favourite beat. I was stalking a valley on the marsh, the other side of

the same fjeld. Between us stretched at least a mile of open, heather-covered hill. Towards evening my stalker and I emerged from the pine-woods on to the open fjeld—the valley was not a mile in length—without having seen a single deer. I paused, with a sigh, under the shelter of a rocky bank, to hand the rifle to my native companion, light the pipe of consolation, and admire the view behind me, when the heavy breathing and the thud of an approaching deer became distinctly audible in the still evening air. The rifle was promptly thrust into my outstretched hand as the pipe and pouch fell unheeded to the ground, while over the ridge above me, distinct against the sunset sky, appeared a fine pair of branching antlers, and the next moment the splendid stag that carried them trotted by me within 60 yards. The rifle cracked, and, after a mad rush down the hill, over rolled the stag stone-dead, with an express bullet through the heart. He had evidently been moved from the adjoining beat, and had taken straight over the fjeld. On returning home I found that my friend, although accompanied by an unusually good native stalker, had not seen the stag, and knew nothing of his existence. No doubt he had been lying down. All these are examples of the lucky incidents of sport which come to us all in turn, and which add some fascination to its pursuit.

One of the best orthodox stalks I ever enjoyed on Hitteren occurred one year on my first day after landing, and when thoroughly out of condition after a long Parliamentary session and then a four days' voyage across the North Sea. But what matters, if but the desired object be attained ?

We had landed at Havn Bay—Alex Henderson,

Ralph Riddell Carre, and myself—late one August evening, from the Wilson steamer, after a somewhat rough passage, and next day went up to our stalking-hut by the shores of Stör Fjeld Lake for the usual fishing picnic, and to take our first stretch of forest walking. About 5 p.m. I left my companions fishing in the loch, with a request to return home to dinner without me if I did not return in reasonable time. I might have had a presentiment, perchance, of what was to befall. Beyond the lake was some open, undulating ground, studded here and there with small lakes and isolated patches of birch and pine wood. It was a very quiet and out-of-the-way part of our ground, a favourite resort, at times, for good stags. Daniel Ström was with me, and, though ostensibly bound on a fishing picnic, he had thoughtfully brought the rifle in its cover, and I had my stalking-glass. We went a mile beyond the lake to a convenient ridge, whence much of the open ground could be spied. It was a lovely evening, without any wind, and not a cloud in the sky. I had already commenced to develop a thirst. The glass swept the ground in front, Daniel meanwhile lighting his pipe. Then, after a pause: 'I can see deer, Daniel,' said I. 'A hind, I think.' Daniel was only faintly interested. I looked closer, and then made out a larger beast, evidently a stag. But the deer were over a mile away, feeding in an open valley, and the quality and size of the stag were somewhat difficult to make out. I gave Daniel the glass. After a long look he shook the ashes out of his pipe and showed signs of animation. 'A fine stag, I am sure,' said he.

All thoughts of dinner were flung to the winds.

We studied the lay of the ground, and then proceeded to make the circuit of an inconvenient lake that lay between us and the deer. A mile or more further on found us crouching—in my case panting, perspiring, and parched with thirst—behind a hillock, gazing on two hinds feeding a few hundred yards away in an open flat, but with no stag in sight. He had probably fed on into a hollow beyond. We waited ten minutes or so, but no stag appeared, and the question was, how to pass the hinds. We tried another circuit, and promptly ran into a miserable knobber, feeding all by himself beyond a ridge ; just avoided scaring him by a hair's breadth and no more ; had to take still a wider circuit ; and eventually—speaking for myself, in the last stages of exhaustion —reached the foot of a steep hillside, on the horizon of which one of the hinds was slowly feeding out of sight. The stag must either be beyond her, thought I, or what we had originally spied was a phantom of the imagination. I took the rifle from Daniel, for it was now getting dark, and in desperation crawled on after the disappearing hind. Every yard of my progress brought fresh ground into sight, and just as I was nearing the summit, there, 50 yards in front of me, appeared a fine stag, feeding out of a hollow, and broadside on. He looked as big as a horse against the evening sunset sky. One step, however, would take him over the ridge and out of sight. A fairer chance I never had, and yet, being pumped and out of condition, I could not hold the foresight on his shoulder. Finally a double shot rang out, and Daniel came running up, as I sprang to my feet. I knew the first shot had gone anywhere but into the stag ; but the second barrel had, I felt, more by chance than

skill, been better directed. The stag was just disappearing as I had fired it. We went forward in the dusk, found him halting and limping down the hill among the rocks, shot through the ribs, and promptly finished him. He carried a very fine eleven-point head—one of the very best.

A very dilapidated and exhausted, yet light-hearted, stalker reached Havn about eleven o'clock that night.

I have spoken of the native stalkers of Hitteren. None of them, so far as my experience goes, can compare for science and skill with the best Scotch stalkers. The most scientific Norwegian stalker I ever met, and a thoroughly accomplished and unscrupulous poacher, was a schoolmaster on the island of Tusteren. This by the way. But many of the old Hitteren natives had served a long apprenticeship in wood stalking with a 'gammel Norske rifler,' a ponderous muzzle-loading rifle of wondrous dimensions, a marvel to see. Up to 100 yards this weapon threw a heavy round bullet from a barrel 5 feet long or so with great accuracy. The native 'Jager' seldom missed a standing chance at point-blank range, and generally took a rest on some moss-covered rock or bunch of heather. I know several Hitteren natives who tell me they have killed, in old times, their hundred deer. At a moving or running deer they never used to shoot. The Norske rifle is useless for the purpose. Occasionally they drove to passes, when the wily hunter would endeavour to stop the passing deer by a whistle or imitation bellow, and so get a standing shot. If this device failed, the trigger was not pressed. I shall never forget the contempt displayed many years ago by the Tusteren native hunters for my single ·500 bore Henry express

rifle, the first some of them had ever seen. Alongside the 'gammel Norske rifler' it looked a mere toy. It was only by practical proof of its effect on the body of a stag, and by showing its trajectory on the fjord, that I finally succeeded in dispelling this contempt. The more experienced Hitteren native has the greatest respect for English express rifles, and the value of their handiness and low trajectory in the case of moving or running shots.

A favourite native method of procedure is, at early dawn or in the evening, in the rutting season when stags are belling, to imitate the bellow of a stag. The better, and therefore more bellicose, the stag, the easier he falls a victim to this deception. I will not discuss the ethical question as to whether or not this is a depraved form of sport, and the perpetration of a low and shameful fraud on a noble animal. It is certainly practised in most woodland countries, and I have occasionally on Hitteren participated in and enjoyed the process. From a breeding point of view, moreover, it is obviously better to kill a master stag after, rather than before, the commencement of the rut. Beguiled, possibly, to his death, he will, at all events, have first begotten his kind. In my opinion, if it is right to kill a stag at all, the hunter is justified in practising every form of deception in order to attain his end. A royal woodland stag is an exceedingly wily animal, well fitted by nature, and in his native country, to look after himself. Even in the rutting season he is difficult to get at, and generally comes round to get the wind of the belling sportsman, and seldom, if ever, rushes blindly on his fate. The ruse is most successful when it is nearly dark, and therefore most difficult to shoot. I once had three

stags belling round me in answering chorus. It was only after the most careful manœuvring that I got a shot at dusk at the only one I saw, who had come round to get our wind. He happened to be a peculiarly light-coloured and very heavy stag; otherwise I could not have seen to shoot and kill him as I did. The natives are accustomed to kill their deer either in the latter days of August, when the long northern evenings give good opportunity of open stalking, or in the rutting season, when stags can be heard. They hold a theory that it is useless to stalk for a fortnight or so in September, when the days have shortened, and the stags have not commenced in love and war to roam, but, rather, spend the daytime lying in the thickest woods.

This brings me to an important variety of Hitteren sport, namely, deer-driving, which we practise mostly in September.

'This is not sport,' I think I hear someone say. My answer is: 'Try it, and see.' By deer-driving I do not mean sending a yelling horde of men to try to drive the deer like so many sheep. As a matter of fact, deer cannot be driven like sheep except with an army of men, and at the risk of completely ruining your ground. 'Deer-moving' is a term that would better express my meaning. Five or six men are required to go quietly through a mile or so of wooded hill and glen. They should all be experienced sportsmen, with some knowledge of the ground and the habits of the deer. The human voice should not be heard. A low whistle or a tap of a tree is the best method of communication, in order that the men may keep their distance and line. The direction and strength of the wind and the nature of the ground

must be carefully taken into account ere plans are laid and carried out. The rifles are placed in passes or between lakes, and it is often no easy task to get them to their posts without moving deer back into the beat and so spoiling everything. Generally speaking, deer-driving requires careful planning, good generalship, and experienced execution; even then, unless luck be with you, the best-laid plans may all go wrong. A woodland stag is one of the most cunning and artful animals alive. He cannot be driven by noise, and frequently breaks back past the drivers, apparently warned by some mysterious instinct of a hidden danger in front. But if all is well arranged, and luck be with you, a master stag or two may trot or gallop through the trees disturbed, but generally not seen by the men, past a rifle.

The opportunity thus given for a shot is occasionally easy, but more often difficult. Buck fever, no doubt, is a disturbing element. I defy any true son of Nimrod who has experienced those sensations to forget the pleasurable excitement, the quickened heart-beat, that he felt at the approach of a warrantable Hitteren stag. He has sat, perchance, one fine September morning—and a fine day in the Throndhjem Amt is worth living for—on some well-chosen bunch of heather amid a grove of pine. The murmuring trickle of the burn, the ripple of the lake on either hand, the mysterious gentle noises of a forest, are all around him, and sound like music in his ears. The brilliantly enhanced colouring of dark green pine, of purple heather, blue lake, and yellow marsh, lit up by a northern sun, and spread out before him like a picture, is a pleasure to behold. From half a mile in front of him runs back a well-known

Hitteren fjeld, clothed around with dense woods, in which it is almost certain that one or two fine stags, at least, are taking their mid-day siesta. A quarter of a mile or so to the right and left are posted two brother riflemen, but out of sound and sight, and for the time he is absolutely alone. Across his knees, ready for instant use, lies his trusty double express, on the prompt and skilful handling of which so much depends. Let us here remark that it takes long experience of this variety of the sport to insure successful results. Insure, did I say? It is too dogmatic a word. The results of a deer-driving shot can never be insured. It is an instinctive action, with little time for thought. The moment at which to take the shot must be promptly seized. A few seconds' hesitation, a hasty or ill-timed movement, and the opportunity may be lost, and nothing but the track of a 'stor hjort' left to mark the event.

To return to our waiting Nimrod. Beyond the burn in front of him is a belt of wood, terminating in an open glade. Any stag crossing that glade will offer a fair chance of a shot at from 50 to 150 yards. On the other hand, if the deer take the edge of the lake on the right, they will be seen in the distance approaching; but the shot when they come will be a quick one, and if allowed to pass the burn, they will at once be out of sight behind a knoll, and must be intercepted. There is hardly a breath of wind, and it is most uncertain how they may come. There is yet a quarter of an hour for a pipe of expectation.

The drivers are three miles away, and by the watch have only just started. Presently on the far skyline appears the tall form—apparent through the glass—of Nils, the head-driver. The men are below and

behind him. He is forward, lest a cunning stag may break over the top of the fjeld. Now deer are on the move. Yes, here comes a hind and her family—a yearling and a calf—out of the belt, across the glade and over the burn—fortunately up wind—within 30 yards of the rifleman, who, sitting absolutely motionless, is not seen. The deer pass on out of the drive, and one danger is avoided. An incautious movement might have turned them back and spoilt the chance of a following stag.

Now, in the main belt of woods that are being driven, can be heard an occasional whistle from the advancing line. Blackgame are flying along the pine-tops, and two fine old capercaillie cocks from the highest wood sail majestically across the valley to a distant hill. See, here come three deer round the edge of the lake! Two surely are stags. They disappear in the belt opposite, and appear again suddenly, trotting hard, 80 yards or so to the right. Now for a stroke of genius. First comes the leading hind, then two eight-point stags. To take a shot at the first stag as they approach the burn is a quick business, and the second stag will turn back at once, spoil the rest of the drive, and give no chance of a shot. Thus the desired right and left will not be obtained. Our canny sportsman therefore lets them cross the burn and disappear behind a hillock. The opposite hillside is steep. They are out of sight. He rises and goes stealthily to the brow behind him just in time. The hind has passed, and the leading stag, seeing a gray shooting-cap rise over the ridge 50 yards to his right through the trees, stands for one second, and instantly an express bullet crashes through his ribs. Ten yards further

and he was out of sight. The second stag dashes full gallop down the burn, but before he turns has shown his broadside in time for a quick second barrel. He disappears, and our sportsman returns quietly to his post, leaving one stag dead upon the ground, and with, somehow, a feeling of confidence that when he pulled the second trigger there was hair on the foresight.

Hardly is he seated, when the whip-like crack of a new Mannlicher rifle sounds across the lake. The clicking of the breech action is plainly audible as three more shots from the post on his right follow in quick succession. Surely another stag has died. But now the drive must be nearly over. A driver emerges from under the hill, when suddenly the thud of a galloping deer is plainly audible, and the next moment a heavy stag, with lumbering gallop, dashes into view across the glade and to the left. It is a fair running chance at 100 yards, and there is just time for two quick barrels. The second shot was certainly high and over; but how about the first? Down the hill he dashes and out of sight. The sportsman's heart sinks low, when a welcome splash sounds from the burn. He has fallen dead in a pool just out of sight, shot through the heart—a noble ten-point stag. In this case a cunning old stager had been outwitted. Disturbed by the drivers from under the fjeld on the left, he was coming on, when the shots from two different directions, with their ringing echoes, had puzzled him. He had lain down, as a stag in doubt will always do, and finally, seeing no deer turn back, had come forward just in front of the advancing drivers. A single returning deer would have effectually turned him back through the line.

But now the drive is over. Two stags lie dead by our sportsman's post. The line of the second stag fired at is cautiously followed. There he lies stone-dead. The express bullet had entered too far back, but, raking forward, had finished him within 200 yards. Three stags at one butt. This is indeed a red-letter day ! The drivers now gradually collect, and the party go round the lake to the Mannlicher rifle post. A disconsolate 'Jager' is found. 'Yes, a splendid beast crossed the glen and gave me four shots, but has gone on.' Soon a blood-trail is discovered. He was evidently hit. Fortunately, a led Finn dog is one of the party, and is put on the trail, when half a mile away the stag is found lying dead. He proves to be the best stag of the season, with a wide and heavy head of eleven points. A single Mannlicher bullet entering the haunch had raked him fore and aft, and the wonder was that he had gone so far. Four stags in a single drive is a record feat for Hitteren.

'Mange skut; meget morsomt jagt,' says Daniel, the head-stalker, who posts the rifles; and we 'skaal' all round. Everything to-day has gone right, as will sometimes happen, even in this uncertain world. Besides the deer killed, two good stags with some hinds have gone back over the fjeld; but they will do for another day. Only hinds and a knobber had passed the rifle on the left. Not the least enjoyable part of the day is the picnic in the heather by the lake, where the sportsmen 'fight their battles o'er again,' and the drivers jabber Norske, and think of the fat ribs of venison that will shortly be distributed amongst them.

CHAPTER III

THAT MAINLAND STAG

Ole had crossed the fjord in an open boat to tell us that the stag was a full royal, with two good 'crowns' and a wide and heavy head. He had been seen feeding at dawn only a week ago on the grass at the old sæter near the lake, close to a thickly-wooded glen that ran clear up the mountain-side to the heather-covered fjeld overlooking the sea.

Our imagination was fired by Ole's story, and our lust for blood was fairly roused. Hitteren stags were well enough in their way, of course. We knew them well, and for many seasons had taken toll of their number, as numerous fine heads now adorning our walls at home testify. These same heads are pleasant reminiscences of the chase in the forests and fjelds of the island deer-forest we had known and loved so long. But an old mainland stag, mark you, with 5 inches of fat on his great round haunches and a full royal head of dark rough horn, whose beam and span told of luxurious feeding on the fjeld grasses of the Throndhjem Amt was quite another matter. Here was a beast worth much extra trouble to obtain. We had occasionally seen and envied a good mainland head, shot by some native, perchance, on an

August morning in the corn. In the hall of our island lodge was a fourteen-point head belonging to our landlord that surpassed anything yet obtained by us on Hitteren, and the sight of which had always made my mouth water, so to speak, and my heart long for such another trophy to take back home across the North Sea.

Occasionally in past seasons we had tried a stalk or a drive in the great mainland glens and on the wooded hillsides opposite our island of Hitteren, but hitherto without success. The size and nature of this mainland country, with its roughness and density of cover, where the stock of red-deer was comparatively small, had hitherto foiled all our efforts even to get a shot at one of these same old stags. We were almost inclined to give it up as a hopeless task. It seemed like the proverbial search for the needle in the haystack.

Combined with a perfect knowledge of the mountain glens, with their shifting winds, where they were born and bred, these old stags of the Throndhjem Amt possessed a cunning of the first order and of the most refined description. The sæter girl could occasionally see one quietly feeding when she was going out with the cows in the morning. The native without a gun, and not thinking of deer, at times would jump a stag from his mid-day couch, and count every point of his horns before the owner of them vanished. But for the hunter with the rifle nothing but game-signs seemed ever visible. The stag was never found where he was expected to be, or else he had chosen his lair between two winds with such artfulness that approach and view were well-nigh impossible.

We had tried a drive or two at times. Either the

HITTEREN FJORD.

NORWEGIAN TROPHIES

stag was not on that particular hillside on that particular occasion—though he had been there yesterday, and would be there probably to-morrow—or else he went calmly back through the drivers—who threw their sticks at him—with a prescience of the hidden danger in front that was almost uncanny.

But hope springs eternal in the human breast, and on receipt of Ole's message we determined, in spite of past failures, on another mainland campaign. Accordingly, on one fine September morning a day or two later the writer was deposited about mid-day on the shores of a large lake some two miles inland, over the fjord from Hitteren, and close to the old sæter already mentioned, with three days' food-supplies of sorts, a trout-rod, and a rifle, and also with a fixed determination somehow to compass the death of the royal stag.

One of our best Hitteren stalkers accompanied me, and the same afternoon we undertook a preliminary stalk up the steep hillside above the sæter towards the head of the glen in which our old friend was wont to lie. Upwards we went for 1,000 feet or more through pine and birch, carefully scanning every likely-looking thicket and glade for the tell-tale yellow-brown patch of hair that would betoken the animal we were after. Presently, as luck would have it, we came to a pine-covered ridge, beyond which was a comparatively open flat, and beyond that, again, some 200 yards away, a thickly-wooded hillside, that terminated in the open, heathery fjeld. It was the head of the glen already mentioned. Just at this moment a mountain mist had descended on the tops, and was beginning to obscure our view.

'Daniel,' said I, handing him my binoculars, 'what

is that yellow patch beyond the flat, just in the shadow of the pines ?'

My companion gazed steadily for a while, and then, old hand as he was, became excited.

'En pen hjort' (A fine stag), he hoarsely whispered ; 'I saw his horn move. He is lying down.'

I took a long look through the glass, and finally made out through the mist, and over 200 yards away, a good stag couched. Should I chance the shot, or try to get nearer ? That was the question. I could only see a small portion of his back and shoulder through trees and mist, and one horn—not quite so large a horn as I had hoped to see. The mist kept coming and going, and I feared to chance the shot, though several times I covered his shoulder with a full bead and was on the point of pressing the trigger. But the light was bad and the distance too great. Finally, leaving Daniel behind, I tried a crawl over the flat, came cautiously behind cover to the edge of the wood, and found the glade without sign of life.

A treacherous curl of wind from the mountain-top had given me away, and the chance, for the time, was gone. We examined the track, and consoled ourselves with the thought that the stag we had seen was not the royal in question, but a smaller animal that was known occasionally to accompany him.

We rowed over the lake to our sleeping-hut on the other side, catching *en route* a dish of beautiful pound trout that served for supper and breakfast, and laid bloodthirsty plans for the morrow. But for the next two days we were doomed to disappointment. In vain did we rise before dawn and cautiously approach the old sæter so soon as there was light to see, in order to catch our old friend grazing on his favourite meadow. In vain for two days we quietly crept up wind

here and there, through pine-wood and birchen glen, without another sight of deer. Signs we found in plenty. There was his broad track, over 4 inches at the heel; here he had couched a few days ago; and here, again, he had rubbed his horns on a young fir. But the stag himself was nowhere to be found. Ole inclined to the opinion that he was on the other side of the mountain, in a broad valley clothed on one side with particularly thick birch-wood that he occasionally frequented, altogether too thick for wood-crawling, but suitable only for a drive. Accordingly, a drive was determined on for the last day. In the morning I varied the programme by going trout-fishing to the end of the lake, where a good-sized stream carried its waters to the fjord below. A rough dam of logs had been constructed where the stream left the lake, and, having killed some half-dozen good trout averaging over a pound trolling with a minnow from the boat on the way thither, I then changed to fly, and, casting from behind the dam into the lake, happened on a good rise, and took out nine speckled beauties from one spot, just where the waters of the lake entered the stream.

In the stream itself I could get nothing but trout-lets hardly worth the catching, until it occurred to me to make an artificial spate. This we accomplished by temporarily removing the two topmost logs of the dam. The water rose a foot, and, fishing downstream with a small salmon fly, the bag was increased by two stream-trout over 3 pounds each.

But time was getting on; and some two hours later, the rod having been laid aside for the rifle, found me across the fjeld, and in the broad valley settling the final plan of campaign with Daniel, Ole, and two other natives hired for the day to help as drivers. The

valley was nearly a mile across. On one side ran a thick birch-wood for some two miles or more. On the south side the cover changed to pine. The centre of the valley, intersected by a stream, was open ground. It was decided to send the four men quietly through the birch-wood, Ole carrying my gun, with instructions to fire a shot at intervals, and thus help to keep the deer well forward. It was a desperate expedient, and only excusable in a rough and outlying valley such as this. I posted myself in the bed of the stream where a belt of birch-wood stretched down almost to its banks. Some 200 yards higher there was a similar belt, with an open space between. The stag, if in the wood, must either break back down wind, which was unlikely; or come down one of those belts of wood across the wind; or go out at the head of the valley. In the latter case I should not see him. If he took the first belt, I should get a 'sitting' shot; if the second, a long and difficult one.

An hour later saw me, loaded rifle on knee, and with senses soothed by Nature's varied music—the trickle of the stream behind me, the murmur of the breeze-stirred woodland, the occasional note of loom or raven overhead—awaiting, with a pleasurable thrill of anticipation, the possible sudden advent of a royal stag. Presently the sound of Ole's first shot resounded with its rolling echoes far down the valley, and marked the drive's advance.

As shot after shot rang out, I watched with growing intentness up an avenue of birch-wood to where the belts divided. 'If he's here, and comes at all, he must come soon,' thought I. 'No self-respecting stag will stand this racket long.' Suddenly, and sooner than I could have hoped, 'He's here,' I whispered to myself,

as I saw a widespread head of horns above a galloping stag, coming straight out of the thick wood and towards where I sat. My heart began to thump. If he kept his course, it would take him to within a few yards of where I waited, finger on trigger and thumb on bolt, with deadly purpose in my heart. But some 300 yards away he turned across the glade and took the other belt. The excitement now was painful. Instead of an easy chance, it was going to be a long and difficult one. Without a pause he came down the further belt of wood, and was never clear of trees until within 30 yards of the stream he ran into the open, plainly a heavy and truly splendid stag, the very animal we were after. Once over the water and into the pine-woods on the other side, the chance would be gone. As he came into the open I gave a shrill whistle. He promptly stopped in his stride, for a moment at gaze, 180 yards away (we stepped the distance after). 'Now or never,' thought I, as with savage intent I steadied for two seconds the foresight on his shoulder and pressed the trigger. He sprang forward at the shot, clear of the smoke. Again—the second barrel—I swung the sight to where neck joined shoulder, and pressed trigger anew as he galloped for the stream. He fell headlong with a crash. The stag was mine.

A light-hearted party returned to the sæter that night. Our particular ambition was achieved. The stag weighed—piecemeal—28 stone of fat meat and bone, and carried a heavy eleven-point head with perfect tops, but with one bay tine missing. The shots, we found, had been lucky. The first had pierced his shoulder ; the second broke his neck. He never knew what killed him.

CHAPTER IV

IN SCOTCH DEER-FORESTS

My first experience of stalking the red-deer of Scotland was enjoyed in Sutherland in 1879. We had taken the shooting of Ribigill, a forest of some 30,000 acres in extent, that ran from the Kyle of Tongue for about fifteen miles inland and along the shores of Loch Loyal. In the centre of the ground Ben Loyal reared its lofty head for 3,000 feet above the North Sea, clothed as to its northern face with a dense birch-wood, in which red-deer loved to harbour. To reach the shooting-lodge at Tongue on the northern coast involved a drive of forty miles in an open coach from Lairg on the Highland Railway. But to the sportsman the destination was well worth the distance and the journey. The bracing northern air; the wild, undulating moorland; the lofty sides of Ben Loyal carved into rocky braes and glens, and clad here and there with thick bracken and birch; the fair expanse of Loch Loyal and two small rivers; and the rocky, pigeon-haunted coast fringed with woods and heath—all combined to supply to the stalker, the grouse-shooter, and the fisherman, as attractive, and, to our youthful imagination, as ideal, a field for their respective operations as could well be desired.

As an instance of the advance in value of Highland shootings during the past twenty years, it is worth noting that our old Ribigill forest has now, I am told, been divided into two separate shootings, an additional lodge having been built on the shores of Loch Loyal, and that each half now brings a higher rent than the whole property afforded in the days of which I write.

We easily obtained our limit of 800 brace of grouse and blackgame, as well as a fair share of blue hares, rabbits, woodcock, and snipe. We caught plenty of trout in Loch Loyal, and an odd salmon or two in the river; and last, but very far from least, we shot the twelve stags to which our bag of deer was restricted.

It is of our deer-stalking experiences that I am now chiefly concerned to write. Sport with the shot-gun and the trout-rod are all very well in their way. No one enjoys these pursuits more than the writer. But I must confess to a certain amount of sympathy with the attitude of Sandy MacDonald, the whilom head-stalker of Ribigill, in his regard to the relative importance of the rod, the gun, and the rifle. To him the pursuit of the wild red-deer of his native land was the serious business of the summer and autumn, in comparison with which all other forms of sport sank into insignificance and were considered as mere child's play. Trout-fishing amused the ladies, no doubt, and whiled away the August days until the deer had cleaned their horns and grown some fat on their haunches. Grouse-shooting also was a pleasant, and perhaps necessary, sort of picnic on the moor, calculated to please the shooting tenant and to afford the dogs some necessary healthful exercise and excitement. But Sandy's eye was always on the hill.

His spare moments were chiefly occupied in spying the steep sides of Ben Loyal above the birch-wood, three miles or so away, from a convenient hillock across the road from the lodge. And it was news of serious moment, to be imparted with proper ceremony in the gun-room after dinner, that he had spied what might be a good beast that morning on the east shoulder, or maybe feeding, as it might happen, in the evening, out of the birch-wood and up the western corrie.

In my youthful ardour of those days for the chase of the bigger game, an ardour only whetted by my recent experiences in Norway and in the Rockies, I was naturally inclined to fall in with Sandy's views—all the more so, perhaps, because the rest of the party preferred, for the most part, the milder joys of the rod and the gun, and persisted in leaving to the writer the monopoly of the red-deer 'on the hill.'

The passage of time has wrought, to some extent, its changes. The charm of grouse-shooting in pleasant company has, if anything, increased its hold upon my affections. The lonely fascinations of trout-fishing in a wild mountain stream, or in some distant loch nestling among the everlasting hills, to say nothing of the more strenuous occupation of flogging some rocky, rapid salmon river, only seem to gain in attractiveness ; and, when it comes to the choice of a pastime, the desire for these relaxations grows upon one with the increase of experience and the advent of middle age. Yet the pursuit of the larger and more noble wild animal will always, where the particular predilection exists, touch a deeper sporting chord, and appeal more strongly to the innate predatory instinct of the able-bodied hunter.

All this to the captious critic may merely be another way of suggesting that, in time, one may get too old for the harder sport. But in 1879, at all events, Sandy MacDonald and I were entirely in accord in thinking that the real business of the shooting season was the pursuit of the deer.

So we looked forward with eagerness to the day when the stalking should commence. And in due course the moment arrived, late in August, when Sandy and I were deposited, at a decently early hour, some ten miles or so up the Lairg road intent on our first stalk.

All the accustomed hills and corries were spied—to no purpose, as luck would have it, until after mid-day Then a good stag was found lying in an open flat taking his afternoon siesta. It was my first experience of a Scotch open-forest stalk, and Sandy and myself had yet to acquire some portion of that mutual confidence that is born of combined and successful achievement.

After a long crawl and many gymnastic exercises, we at length reached a stone within 120 yards of the stag. I could see his horns, and no more, over a tuft of heather. 'We must wait till he rises,' was Sandy's command, and for an hour or more I lay in a bog-hole watching that pair of horns. I suggested whistling him up, but Sandy would have none of it. Was there no better way into him, and then chance a running shot? my youthful impatience urged. Sandy only frowned. I began to think we were there for the day. But fortune favoured us. We were lying on a side-wind, and an inquisitive knobber, feeding into a hollow down wind, suddenly caught a whiff of tainted air. He trotted on to the flat 100 yards away, and

stood for a moment, plainly conveying to the couched stag, by some means of wireless telegraphy unknown to humanity, a sense of urgent impending danger. 'Look out, sir!' whispered Sandy. I also fancied I caught an unparliamentary epithet applied to the knobber. As I thrust the loaded rifle over the stone, the stag sprang to his feet, but stood for a second too long. I had a fair sight of his breast, as he faced me, and the next moment a fine eight-pointer lay on the heather, shot, as fate would have it, exactly in the right spot. Thus was the foundation of a lasting comradeship between Sandy and myself happily laid.

After this first successful experience all went merrily as marriage-bells, though we had our ups and downs, of course. Good stags were not constantly on the ground at the commencement of the season, though a permanent stock of hinds were always to be found in the neighbourhood of Ben Loyal and its steep slopes.

One day, in the intervals of stalking, we were enjoying a grouse-shooting picnic on one of the Loch Loyal beats, and because we had left the rifle behind —though Sandy had not forgotten his glass—two fine stags were promptly spied, during the luncheon interval, quietly feeding on the higher ground above us a mile or more away. The stalker's anguish at having left the rifle in the lodge ten miles distant was heart-rending, but ineffective. We could only promise ourselves a stalk in this direction the following morning, but by that time the stags had vanished.

It is somewhat remarkable how the most accomplished stalker will occasionally overlook a deer. We had a long and arduous walk, I remember, over this portion of the forest the following day, and for some

hours we could find no deer. Every accustomed nook and cranny on the east side of Ben Loyal had been closely spied on that occasion to no purpose, and we were making our way round a steep rocky shoulder, with thoughts intent on lunch at a neighbouring spring. Sandy was ahead with the rifle, and John the gillie was a few yards behind me. Casually looking down the steep hillside beneath us, I saw a patch of red-brown colour among a wilderness of rocks, not 150 yards away; looked again, and made out a good stag lying fast asleep in his mid-day couch. Neither of the men had seen him, simply because he was lying in an unaccustomed spot. Before I could lay hand on rifle, he was up and away, but I managed to wound him before he vanished round the shoulder of the hill.

There is no more unsatisfactory business than hunting a wounded deer, especially without a dog. This particular animal disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up, though we could spy, as we thought, every yard of the ground beneath us from a little further up the hill.

Three days after I killed this same stag within a quarter of a mile of the spot where I had wounded him. It turned out that he had doubled on his tracks directly he was out of our sight in a small hollow below, had rounded the shoulder behind us, and then lain down in a corrie we had just left, and where we subsequently found and shot him.

I have spoken of the thick birch-woods of Ben Loyal. In addition to these, and stretching for a mile or more along the sea-coast west of the lodge, and then running up into a point towards the moorland, where it terminated in a little isolated thickly-wooded

hill, was another great birch-wood. Its leafy glades and mossy dells, through which, here and there, ran trickling burns, arched over with dense green birch-boughs, formed ideal shelter for red-deer. One or more good stags were known regularly to harbour in the recesses of this wood: cunning old stagers, wily as foxes, who knew every trick and artifice of the hunted, and who probably looked upon our frequent attempts to drive them to the rifles as so many exciting games of hide-and-seek.

The existence of good stags in this birch-wood was forcibly impressed on my mind one Sabbath afternoon late in August. A few hundred yards down the road from the lodge was a convenient adjacent hillock, whence a large part of the wood could be comfortably spied, and particularly the upper part of it, which terminated in the little wooded hill I have mentioned.

I walked down to the hillock by the roadside that particular Sunday after tea, to admire the view and to spy for possible deer. To and fro I moved the glass o'er green hill and dale, when a movement of a red body on the little hill in question caught my eye and galvanized attention. Then a fine stag became clearly visible, quietly rubbing his horns on a tree in a small open space on the very brow of the hill. I watched him with eager gaze; noted his spreading horns and fine proportions; marked with painful and envious accuracy exactly how I could have approached to within easy shot had it only been a week-day; and then returned to interview Sandy and arrange a deadly campaign for the future.

At first we deferred driving operations. It was fondly hoped that the stag would play the proper

game, and give his whereabouts away to the spy-glass on a week-day as he had done on the Sabbath, and thus afford opportunity of a quiet crawl and shot. But not a bit of it. We spied every visible hole and corner of those birch-woods for days after without seeing sign of any deer. Early morning, or late in the evening before the gloaming, it was all the same. The stag kept himself most carefully concealed. So at last we took to driving, and, as it happened, killed a good stag in the further portion of the wood, which was somewhat separated from the main part of the cover, at the very first attempt. But he was not the stag we were after. A decent eight-point beastie of 15 stone, no doubt, but, still, not the big one. I had counted every point on the other's horns that Sunday, and they were ten in number, long, wide and heavy, and adorned 18 stone, at least, of sinewy bone and fat venison.

We prided ourselves on the successful first drive, but, as a matter of cold-blooded fact, the shot and kill on that occasion had been a fluke. The eight-point stag did not go where he was intended to be driven, nor break where expected, to certain rifles of the party placed in posts of honour. On the contrary, he insisted on going back through the drivers, and by the merest chance gave a long stern shot to the writer, posted on the flank of the drive, which said shot, by a greater chance still, happened to come off and kill the unlucky stag.

Still, it was only a question of time, we thought, to get the bigger beast. A fond hope, never destined to be realized. We drove that wood regularly once a week through September, and no rifleman ever caught glimpse of the stag we wanted. The drivers used

occasionally to see him going back—his favourite manœuvre—and throw their sticks at him. What became of him when he broke back we never could discover. Study the wind and the ground as one would, and post the rifles never so cannily, our efforts to get a shot at him were all in vain.

The end came at last, but not the end we had anticipated and desired. We were driving the wood late in September, and I bethought me to go in line with the drivers. Three rifles were posted at far corners of the wood, and presently a rifle-shot rang out, much to my delight. 'Surely we have him this time,' thought I. But, to our disgust, it proved to be a roebuck only. No deer had been seen by either rifles or men, though Sandy had come across fresh sign of what looked like the big stag. The party gathered at the far end of the wood, and handed their rifles to the men to carry, preparatory to strolling home along the moor. I walked back as I had come, through the thick cover, more, perhaps, by chance than design, intending to meet the party near the little hill where I had first spied the stag that Sunday so long ago; and as I walked I happened, in the leafy recesses of the wood, to come on the fresh track of a heavy deer, apparently making his way in the direction of the hill in question. I followed on, and came out close under the little hill, the sides of which, for perhaps 150 yards, were densely clothed with thick birch-wood.

With the recollection of Hitteren wood-crawling in my mind, I proceeded, as much from curiosity as anything else, to creep quietly along this thick cover towards the rest of the party, who, as it happened, had lain down on their homeward way for a smoke and chat in the heather not 100 yards from the spur of the

wood. Then, as I crept, surely it seemed that that yellow patch in the trees had a familiar, life-like appearance. Yes, it was certainly a deer. As I instinctively raised the rifle, there was a movement and a rush of some heavy animal in the wood in front of me; the yellow patch disappeared, and presently there arose a chorus of shouts and exclamations from the party outside. I emerged, breathless, into the open a few moments after, and only then learnt the full extent of our failure and disappointment. It *was* the big stag, after all. He had broken from the wood close to the party resting on the moor, with empty rifles, alas! in their covers, and so unavailable; had trotted majestically past them within 30 yards, with spreading horns well laid back; had gracefully disappeared over the near skyline, while the men shouted and the riflemen gazed, and so vanished in the direction of Ben Loyal.

The rutting season was close at hand, the time of love and war in the open forest, where his faithful hinds kept tryst and where his rivals would soon be challenging his sway; and so the big stag of the Ribigill woods departed from our midst, and was not seen again that season. I have no doubt that this particular piece of thick cover out of which by chance I had disturbed him was his regular place of refuge and concealment, where he was constantly wont to retreat when we disturbed his haunts by our driving operations.

In spite of this particular failure, we secured our limit of twelve deer that season, artistically killing the last two stags on the very last day, as I elsewhere relate. So I retain a fond and pleasing recollection of the steep sides of Ben Loyal, of its glens and

corries, and of the wide-stretching slopes of the moorland forest beyond it, where five-and-twenty years ago, in company with Sandy the stalker and John the gillie, it was my fortune to enjoy with all the zest of youth my first experience of shooting the wild red-deer of Scotland.

This experience has since been repeated on other moors and forests, and, so far as I have got, I have never found it pall. In some sense it is true that Scotch red-deer are not now actually wild game in the full meaning of the term. Park stags have occasionally been imported to improve the stock and enlarge the heads. There are wire fences here and there, and deer are sometimes hay-fed in winter. No doubt all these things introduce, in theory, an artificial element of sorts, which, again in theory, should detract from the wild nature of the sport of deer-stalking. But as a matter of practice, and particularly in the wilder forests of Scotland, where Nature's steep hills and corries, her wild glens and open moor—

> 'Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
> Land of the mountain and the flood'

—cannot be seriously interfered with by the hand of man, the sport is real and natural enough, and also arduous enough to satisfy most, if not all, of those to whom wild sport appeals. The powder must be 'straight,' the leg-sinews must be hard and strong, and the nervous systems of those who undertake it must be fairly sound and healthy, if successful results are to be obtained. There is also the discipline of occasional mischance and failure to undergo.

In 1889 I paid a visit to a shooting friend, E. Baldwin, who was then the tenant of the Forest of

Altnaharra, lying halfway between Lairg and Tongue, on the shores of Loch Naver. It was late in the season, and I had kindly been asked up to help my host kill his last half-dozen stags for the year. I had just returned from a month on our island of Hitteren, where sport with our woodland stags had been good, and, coming fresh from some weeks' use of my favourite double ·400 Purdey express rifle in Hitteren woods, I naturally thought to hold my own in an open Sutherland forest, with an experienced stalker to take me up to the deer in the most approved and scientific fashion.

I had something yet to learn of the mischances of sport.

The first day on the hill we saw no deer until towards mid-day, when a stag was heard belling on the farther side of a low hill. The rifle, which had not till then been taken from its cover, was soon in my hand, and a short and comparatively easy approach brought us to within 150 yards of the deer, who was obliging enough to walk across an open bog in front of me, broadside on, just as we came into the shot.

Up to this point all had gone well. The wind was right, the light was good, the stag was a fine shootable beast, and there was I, with my favourite rifle in hand, kneeling on one knee within nice range, intent on having his blood. With the utmost confidence I pressed the trigger, though somehow the rifle did not seem to come up quite right. The bullet whistled harmlessly into space, somewhere near, but not into the stag, who with a bound and then a gallop disappeared over the brow as my second bullet equally ineffectively sped after him.

It was obviously a clean miss, and a bad one at that.

I felt that the reputation of Hitteren riflemen had seriously suffered, and that I had fallen several degrees in Donald's estimation.

He was politely sympathetic and consoling. It might be that I was not quite used to the light, or perhaps the recent passage across the North Sea had affected my nervous system. 'He was a fair-r stag, but no a varra gude one.' And so we proceeded to look for another. All this time it never occurred to either of us to examine the rifle, my favourite weapon, that had been my constant companion for a month or more that same season already.

We found another stag within a mile, of course. It always happens that way when something is wrong that has nothing to do with the deer. This time we had a crawl, and the stag again was obliging. I lay at full length behind a convenient hillock, placed exactly at the right angle, took a steady and extra-careful aim at a stag standing absolutely still and three-quarters facing me at 120 yards or thereabouts, pressed the trigger as gradually and firmly as it was in the power of human finger to do, and—again made a clean miss. The stag, a fair eight-pointer, turned and ran straight away over the moor, leaving me too surprised and disgusted even to think of firing a second barrel at his fast-retreating stern.

Donald this time said very little. Possibly he thought the more. Within the space of two hours or so he had brought me to within shot of two fairly good stags, in the most skilful and scientific manner, on a forest where there were no steep hills and deep corries, and the stalking was none too easy, and where a thorough knowledge of the ground was absolutely necessary. All I had to do was to hold straight, and

the stags were ours. The light was good, the day was fine; there were no excuses to be made.

Besides all this, the season was getting on, and it were as well not to throw too many chances away, or the proper bag of deer would not be obtained, and fair justice would not be done to the reputation of the forest. All these thoughts crossed my mind, and no doubt Donald's as well. But I did not feel equal to the task of offering any explanations, and, in fact, began to look upon myself, so far as deer-stalking was concerned, as an impostor of the most transparent kind. The disagreeable thought even thrust itself upon me that my nervous system was breaking down, that the initial stages of a premature old age had suddenly commenced, and that a deer-forest was no fitting place for my autumn holiday.

The rifle—which, strange to say, I never for a moment thought of examining—was returned to its cover. It is true that as I fired the second shot an unaccustomed slight feeling of awkwardness in its alignment had again been felt. But the thought that anything was wrong with my favourite weapon, the old familiar friend of years, that had served me so recently and so well in other fields, never for one instant occurred to my troubled mind.

We adjourned in silence to a convenient spring for lunch. Donald, the stalker, and Alister, the gillie, sat a little apart, and conversed in inaudible tones with one another. I was left to reflect on the chances and drawbacks of sport, and a bitter feeling of hatred of the stags I had just missed pervaded my being. After luncheon was over we had a perfunctory drink of whisky all round. The toast of 'more blood' was clearly inadmissible, so we drank to 'better luck.'

'Do you often have stags missed in this forest, Donald ?' I feebly asked.

'We've been fairly lucky this season, so far,' was the reply. 'But,' he went on, 'Mr. Blank' (a recently departed guest) 'missed a good stag last week, sir.'

'Those were two good chances I had this morning, Donald, I suppose ?' was my next remark, made in the vain hope of its being contradicted.

'Varra gude indeed, sir,' was the uncompromising reply, and, after a pause, 'The stags were very fair-r beasts.' Then came an attempt at consolation: 'Perhaps we'll be doing better after lunch, sir. There's some good ground awa' west that we have to spy.'

And so another forward move was made. But my cup of disappointment was not yet fully drained. The lesson that was being taught must needs be rubbed in yet more indelibly. We walked a mile or two across an open boggy flat to a convenient hill, whence some good deer-ground could be thoroughly searched with the glass. Again, and as a matter of course, another stag was seen at once, this time a really good one, carrying an obviously heavy head. It was one of those days in which stags kept coming into view with remarkable persistence and regularity. And again everything favoured the stalk. We watched the stag moving quietly over a grassy flat below us, until he lay down among some rocks on a gentle slope of the far hillside. Then, with confident alacrity as to the course to be pursued, Donald, who was one of the best stalkers I have ever known, guided me on a long détour to the farther side of the aforesaid slope, and we commenced the final crawl. I submissively followed Donald, until, stretched at full length behind a stone, I quietly raised my head in

obedience to his sign, and saw the tips of the stag's horns not 100 yards away among the rocks.

'How near-r would you like to tak' the shot, sir?' he whispered. 'We can cra-al to within 10 yards, I believe, if you wad like it.'

Then emotions of resentment, not only against Fate in general, but Donald in particular, began to stir my blood. I had become, it would seem, an object of respectful pity and compassion. In anger and desperation I seized the rifle, motioned Donald to lie still, while I crawled on alone to a rock some 30 yards ahead. Cautiously peering round its edge, there lay the stag—a noble beast—not 60 yards away, all unconscious of our presence. I gently thrust the rifle round the rock, with fell purpose in my heart; took a quiet and steady aim behind the stag's shoulder as he lay—was it still my fancy, or, perhaps, the position behind the rock, that somehow gave the weapon an unaccustomed feel when the stock was cuddled to my cheek?—and quietly pressed the trigger. The stag sprang to its feet at the report of the rifle, staggered slightly as if wounded, and the next moment was over the brow and out of sight.

Donald joined me. 'I could have taken you nearer, sir,' said he. 'But the stag wass hit, what-effer,' he continued.

'It was near enough,' I replied. 'If I cannot kill a stag at 60 yards, I cannot kill one at all.'

We followed that stag for a mile or more. At first there were a few drops of blood on the track. Then the widespread, deep hoof-marks showed him to be going strong and well straight over the moor for some distant point. We never saw him again.

I sat down by a burn and took a despairing drink.

The men reposed in silence on the heather. This was the crowning, piled-up sorrow of the day. A third stag, and a right good one, practically missed! The wound, wherever it was, could only have been a slight one.

The varied incidents of the three different stalks were reviewed in my mind with recurring persistence and accumulated vexation. The thought of what our bag of deer that day might have been, but was not, only added point to the annoying recollection. Then a thought suddenly occurred to my mind.

'These stags of yours are shot-proof, Donald, or the devil's in the rifle. Let me have a look at it.'

Donald took my rifle from the cover, and, as he handed it, looked for a moment at the sights, and then, 'Is that backsight all right, sir?' said he.

I glanced at the sight in question, and then let fall some observations that are not contained in any English dictionary. The sight was shifted about an eighth of an inch to the right. Some slight blow had done it, and it was only now, late in the afternoon, when three stags had been approached, shot at, and missed, and the day's work was done, that I had thought to examine the weapon, and so discovered the displacement. It merely aggravated the annoyance of the mischance that it was remedied in a moment. The sight was gently knocked back with the handle of a knife, and the weapon at once restored to its former condition of efficiency. It was only a simple matter of subsequent calculation to ascertain that the displacement of the sight made the rifle shoot 10 inches to the right at 100 yards, and so on in proportion to the distance of the shot. The lesson thus taught me, in a manner impossible to forget,

was that one's rifle should be carefully inspected every morning before use. I also now have my back-sight firmly screwed in place.

During the next three days I killed two fair stags with Donald—the only further chances obtained—and shortly after returned south, relieved, at all events, in my mind on the subject of premature old age.

In 1893 I enjoyed ten days of the best wild Scotch sport I have ever experienced, thanks to the kindly hospitality of Colonel W. H. Walker, M.P., then the lessee of the three adjoining forests of Fasnakyle, Knockfin, and Luibnadamph. These three forests, comprising over 30,000 acres, are situated in the wild and mountainous part of Inverness-shire that includes Glen Cannich, Strath Glass, and Glen Affaric—a district acknowledged by all who have seen it to contain some of the most typical and picturesque scenery of the Scottish Highlands.

Here it was that, late in September and during the first days of October, I was fortunate enough to kill eighteen stags in ten days' stalking and also to land seven salmon during two or three mornings' fishing in the upper waters of the Beauly River, flowing past Fasnakyle Lodge.

The experience was delightful, but, as a sporting feat, was nothing remarkable under the circumstances. For it so happened that, while the combined forests in question were full of deer, having been leased from Mr. Winans, who had not shot them for thirteen years, the river Beauly was also at the time of my visit in splendid order for fishing and full of autumn salmon.

One morning I was fortunate enough to get three

fair salmon before 10 a.m., and then, going on the hill, to secure a good stag. Another day the numbers were reversed. My host was sending me over to the most distant part of the forest, where for three memorable days I lived in the shepherd's house and stalked deer to my heart's content in the wild corries of Luibnadamph. Before starting, a salmon of 12 pounds was caught below the lodge, and then, on the way to the shepherd's house, three good stags were killed.

It is not often given to us to have opportunity for this kind of varied sporting bag, and so the recollection does not fade. All the different incidents of the particular stalks, and, as it may chance, the kills, remain firmly printed in the memory. It sometimes happens, curiously enough, that on some days confidence may for the time disappear, and one dreads, in a way, to fire the shot. It is, perchance, a particularly fine beast in a particularly awkward spot. That last miss a few days back has, maybe, shaken our confidence. The rifleman has an attack of nerves, and is only too conscious that his hand may fail him, and pictures to himself the stalker's feelings after the event.

The day I went over to Luibnadamph was, as I have said, a three-stag day. Early in the morning, going up through a birch-clad glen, I had killed a fair nine-pointer with a fluky snapshot. We had jumped him in a hollow, and I should have killed him with the first barrel, but had only just secured him, and no more, with a second bullet that struck the skull at the base of the horn as he ran. Alec, my stalker, evidently considered the kill an inartistic one, and, moreover, I had spoilt the head.

Then we emerged on to the more open forest.

There were plenty of deer, but they were restless, and the difficulty generally was to get through hinds or past inferior stags to the warrantable beast one wanted.

Our next move that day was to spy a very fair stag on a bare and open hillside near a parcel of hinds, and with infinite trouble, after a long round, we crawled over a small flat halfway up the hill, and just out of sight of the deer, when Alec, the stalker, suddenly petrified, so to speak, in front of me. I glanced beyond him and down the hill. There appeared a magnificent ten-pointer, obviously a far better animal than the stag we were after, on his way to drive off his rival and annex the hinds. This operation was subsequently carried on in our full view, but too far off for a shot. At length we retraced our steps, inch by inch, until we were over a ridge and out of sight. Another long round, another crawl, and I lay behind a boulder watching the ten-pointer a good 200 yards away.

The beast never would stand still. I was panting and exhausted. I had almost forgotten what it felt like to stand upright.

'Alec, I do not like the shot.'

'But you must tak' it, sir,' was the rejoinder.

'Can't we get to that next stone yonder ?'

'It canna be done.'

And so I paltered with the opportunity. It was by far the best stag I had seen that season, and I simply hated to fire and miss. For at least five minutes I covered him, high up behind the shoulder, but feared to press the trigger. Half a dozen times the finger crooked. Each time the stag had moved. But the end came at last. He stood at length, in a bad light,

but a fair broadside shot, 210 paces away, as we afterwards stepped it. The shot was fired. The smoke cleared. There was the stag trotting along the hill. 'It's all right, sir,' said Alec. But I gave the deer a second barrel and—he fell dead. This stag carried the best-topped ten-point head I have ever killed. He was shot just behind the shoulder, and I do not know to this day which bullet of the two killed him, though Alec said it was the first.

The bag of that day was completed by the death of a third stag—an eight-pointer—compassed late in the evening, and not far from the shepherd's house, in an ordinary, orthodox spy in the open, a skilful approach on Alec's part, and a clean kill on mine.

The last two days of my visit to Fasnakyle were spent in driving the woods of Knockfin, in company with another rifle and a most cheery companion, L. H. Jones, of Larkhill, near Liverpool. Our host had been compelled to go south, but we managed, with the assistance of the head-keeper, who also carried a rifle, to kill ten good stags in the two days, and thoroughly to enjoy ourselves.

At one stand on the first day I was fortunate enough to get three good stags, one a splendid eleven-pointer that in length and beam of horn compares favourably with any trophy of the kind in my possession. In the same drive Jones killed a nineteen-stone ten-pointer that proved to be the heaviest stag of the season at Fasnakyle.

On the last day I also saw, and might have killed, a hummel stag, the only one of the kind I have ever seen. But it happened that, being on the look-out for deer with good antlers, the hummel stag passed my post unnoticed until it was too late for the shot.

When the men came up, one of the keepers asked me if I had not seen the hummel; whereupon I remembered noticing for a moment what I had taken to be an enormous hind passing through the trees.

I have heard on good authority that the hummel, or hornless, stag is usually master of the herd. At first sight this appears a remarkable fact, but probably is accounted for in a simple manner by the extra size and weight of the beast, the whole of his vitality no doubt going into bone and sinew, instead of partly into horn.

Colonel Walker was kind enough to send me at the time his season's bag at Fasnakyle and the other two forests mentioned, and at his request I compiled a statement on the subject which was subsequently published in the *Field* of February 7, 1894.

This Fasnakyle bag constitutes, I believe, a 'record' in the annals of Scotch deer-stalking. The details were as follows:

In forty-seven days on the hill 202 stags were obtained on the three forests in question, the first being killed on August 19 and the last on October 14, 1893. Of these stags, 185 were killed in forty-five days' stalking. The last two days were spent, as I have said, in driving the woods, when ten stags were shot; and seven wounded stags were during the season recovered subsequent to the days on which they were respectively shot. There were never more than three rifles out on any one day, the average being two and a half rifles per day.

The average weight of the 195 stags brought in and weighed (in stones of 14 pounds) was 14 stone 4 pounds, gralloched, but including heart, lungs, and liver. The heaviest stags included one of 19 stone

9 pounds (shot by L. H. Jones), one of over 18 stone, six of over 17 stone, fourteen of over 16 stone, forty-one of over 15 stone, and forty-nine of over 14 stone.

The heads obtained included one imperial of fifteen points, ten royals, thirteen stags of eleven points, thirty of ten points, thirty-five of nine points, forty-one of eight points, and thirteen switch-horns, the latter, as all stalkers know, being often the oldest and heaviest stags. Taking the entire number, the heads averaged eight and a half points per stag.

The lessee and host, Colonel W. H. Walker, M.P. —who did most of his own stalking, occasionally being in alone at the death, and gralloching the stag himself —killed in forty days' stalking, to his own rifle, 118 stags, including one imperial of fifteen points, seven royals, eight stags of eleven points, sixteen of ten points, nineteen of nine points, twenty-eight of eight points, and nine switch-horns.

This performance is, I think, worthy of mention as most probably the 'record' for a single rifle in fair forest stalking, a record chiefly due to hard work and 'straight' powder. The guests, of whom I had the good fortune to be one, killed the remaining eighty-four stags amongst them. The above figures will clearly demonstrate to all acquainted with Scotch stalking that the deer killed were mainly warrantable stags, with a fair proportion of master stags. Indiscriminate shooting was not indulged in to swell the total.

The fact that the ground had not been shot for the last thirteen years of Mr. Winans' lease lends, I am inclined to think, additional interest to the statistics given. No doubt this fact accounts, to a considerable

extent, for the numbers and quality of the deer obtained. I am informed that when the forests were first leased by Mr. Winans the stock of deer was comparatively small, and present results are, therefore, largely due to the thirteen years' close-time maintained during his lease. From this point of view it may be remarked that Mr. Winans thus greatly increased the sporting facilities, and consequent financial value, of the district and its neighbourhood.

It must not be supposed, however, that the large increase in the number of deer, and their immunity from pursuit for so long a period, made them too easy of approach, or detracted from the hard work and knowledge of their habits and the ground, which, combined with 'straight' powder, are conditions necessary for all successful deer-stalking. We found that the numbers of the deer often made the work harder and the stalking more difficult, as parcels of watchful hinds and inferior stags were constantly intervening between the stalker and his prey. A single mischance or mistake would, and often did, clear a whole hillside without the chance of a shot. In addition to this, the stalkers and gillies employed, whilst thoroughly good men of their class, laboured under the disadvantage of having had no practice in approaching deer with the rifle for thirteen years—a disadvantage which those who know the qualities and practice required to make a first-rate stalker can fully appreciate. The result was, therefore, obtained by real hard work and good shooting, and was certainly no luxurious 'arm-chair slaughter,' as some casual readers might possibly suppose. So far as my observation went, the thirteen years' close-time seemed to have increased the number of moderate and inferior

stags more than any other class of deer. The hinds, though numerous, were certainly not, in my opinion, too plentiful for a first-class forest, after the proper proportion were killed. (Four rifles killed 113 hinds in five days' stalking and driving in December.) The inferior stags, however, appeared to me somewhat too plentiful, and, besides constantly, though no doubt innocently, interfering to save their betters, they could only have the effect of begetting, so far as they were concerned, an inferior and degenerate stock.

Judging, however, by what we saw and heard during the last few days of the season, when the stags were belling, and during the last two days, when a portion of the large Fasnakyle and Knockfin woods were driven, a good supply of master stags had succeeded in eluding the rifle and still remained to keep up the quality of the deer by the operation of the good old law of 'might is right.' One herd of over 200 stags, known as the 'Band of Martyrs,' was constantly seen in one part of the forest; it did not contain a single head worth shooting, and was left in comparative security, though a member of the herd would be occasionally slain by some exasperated sportsman, whose stalk after a warrantable stag it had spoiled. Had these inferior stags been indiscriminately shot, the total might have been very largely increased.

So much, then, for the details and nature of a bag that I have yet to learn, among those of its kind, has been exceeded, or even closely approached.

And so much, also, for the relation of some of my personal sporting experiences in Inverness-shire and other Highland forests now embodied in this chapter, experiences that have been enjoyed mainly through the kindly hospitality of friends. They

are recorded for what they are worth, to beguile, perchance, some leisure moments of others who possess like tastes and have doubtless enjoyed similar experiences.

We live, no doubt, in a democratic, strenuous, and commercial age—an age of grandfatherly legislation and of occasional Deer-forest Commissions, and such like. There are, perhaps, certain quarters in which deer-stalking and kindred sports are looked upon as a species of social and political crime. 'Overfed aristocrats or plutocrats devastate whole provinces of country suitable for prosperous sheep-farms, in order to preserve and then slaughter tame deer for the satisfaction of their brutal and bloodthirsty instincts.' This is, in effect, the way in which the case might possibly be put by some whose knowledge of the subject is neither practical nor extensive. But I am not concerned, here at all events, either to answer these views or to defend deer-stalkers in general or myself in particular. Sportsmen can well be trusted, as a class, to look after themselves and their own pursuits.

So far, however, as the 'obese plutocrat' is concerned, the feelings of the most vindictive sportsman would be amply satisfied by a sentence condemning the members of, say, a Radical Deer-forest Commission to live for a month on the produce of their own unaided rifles from a Highland deer-forest. In very truth the sentence would be too severe, and even inhuman; for in all probability, if strictly enforced, it would entail starvation on those on whom it might be passed.

I have not the slightest doubt that we who delight to satisfy our inherited, possibly primitive, but distinctly healthy, predatory instincts in the chase, will

always continue, as opportunity serves, and while health and strength sufficient for the purpose remain, shamelessly and without apology to indulge ourselves therein. Some form of the chase is, in many cases, a necessary relaxation for hard-worked professional or business men in this strenuous, money-making, political-agitating age. Fortunate is he who of himself, or through his friends, can get opportunity for this sort of holiday if and when he wants it.

At the same time there are economic consolations, even for those who may condemn us. The high rents paid for Scotch deer-forests, and their heavy local rate assessment, both tend indirectly to ameliorate the naturally hard economic conditions of Highland life. A large number of Highlanders also obtain employment at good wages as stalkers, gillies, and watchers ; innkeepers and local tradesmen all participate in the benefits of money circulated ; and many a Highland cottage larder is stocked with a good supply of winter meat obtained from the forest venison that is distributed.

And, lastly, all these economically beneficial results are extracted from rugged and mountainous Highland districts, picturesque and beautiful no doubt, but also at times too much snow-covered and storm-swept for the maintenance of any possible equivalent in sheep.

Long may the larger, hardier, and more active red-deer continue to live and thrive in the natural fastnesses of their own Highland glens and mountains. They are deer whose indigenous ancestors were formerly hunted by Scottish Kings. Long may they be preserved and maintained for the virile purpose of being stalked and shot by successive generations of our own island race.

CHAPTER V

REINDEER-STALKING

The wild reindeer of Norway have provided in the past most excellent stalking for British sportsmen. The high open fjelds on which they range, and their wary, wandering habits, combine to make the sport of hunting them in a high degree scientific as well as arduous. Scientific, because the game can and should be spied at a distance, and the method of the approach carefully thought out beforehand, and then put into execution on the exact lines of Scotch open-forest stalking. Under these conditions the chances and uncertainty inherent in woodland hunting are largely absent. There is no thick cover to conceal the exact whereabouts of the game, which is often first seen miles away on snow-glacier or bare rocky hillside.

The sport is also arduous, for it involves long walks and climbs on the high rocky fjelds of Norway, miles from any habitation ; and the hunter must be content to sleep in a mountain sæter, or in some stalking hut or tent erected for the purpose.

The past quarter of a century has witnessed some changes in the habitat and numbers of the wild reindeer of Scandinavia. When I first visited Norway, in the ' seventies,' there were no tame reindeer, to

the best of my knowledge and recollection, in the Throndhjem Amt, or south of it. North from Throndhjem the various tribes of Lapps — those curious nomadic little people who appear to have billeted themselves from time immemorial on the people of Norway, cuckoo-fashion, and to have made themselves free on the Norske highlands without payment of rent, and simply by right of user—were numerous enough. Their main possession and source of food, clothing, and house-covering were the herds of tame reindeer they always had with them.

So there was a clear line of demarcation—to the north Lapps and tame reindeer, and none of the wild variety ; tame and wild being as different from one another in habits and wariness as domestic sheep and the *Ovis montana* of the Rockies; to the south, on the wide and high fjelds between Throndhjem, Bergen, and Christiania, no Lapps and no tame herds, but plenty of the wild reindeer.

Gradually during the past twenty years the Lapps and their tame herds have come further south ; and it does not require much exercise of the imagination to realize what this meant for the wild deer whose domain was thus encroached upon.

No game laws and no close time could prevent the poaching of wild reindeer under these conditions, in season and out of season. The Lapp was master of the fjeld.

Above the elk-forest that I rent with a friend on the west side of the Gula Valley is a fine stretch of open rocky fjeld, covered here and there with the glutinous white reindeer moss that Nature has thoughtfully, and no doubt intentionally, provided for the support of the particular deer that is part of the indigenous wild life

of the Scandinavian fjeld. Before the incursion of the Lapp there were plenty of reindeer—so the natives say—in this identical fjeld. Now there are none, one reason being that a family of Lapps have for some years been quartered at the head of the Laerdal Valley, and several hundreds of their tame reindeer graze over the high fjelds between that valley and Aasen Farm.

The same thing has happened, I have been told—to a partial extent, at all events—on the fjelds above the Sundal Valley, where formerly excellent wild reindeer stalking could be obtained, as I happen to know from personal experience. It has also probably occurred in other districts south of Throndhjem.

Clearly I write this from a sportsman's standpoint. We naturally regret the narrowing of our happy hunting-grounds, and the partial extinction of a unique wild animal that we liked to hunt and kill for our diversion and for sport. The Lapp must live, no doubt—the necessity to exist is upon him; and it is for the Norske people and the Norske Government, and for them alone, to control the movements and the predatory action of their own nomadic population as best they will or may. If, however, some working compromise could haply be discovered, whereby certain high fjelds could always be kept free and undisturbed as wild reindeer forests, to be rented to the sportsman who would hunt thereon in reason, and no more, then would a valuable asset accrue to the revenues of Norway, and much content prevail in certain Anglo-Saxon minds; also, the wild reindeer would continue to live and roam on native fjeld.

It is a sign of the times that by recent Norske legislation all reindeer-stalking has been forbidden for

a period of five years from 1903, in the hope that the stock of wild deer may be maintained, and even increased.

It was on the Dovre Fjeld that I first hunted the reindeer, with his dirty-gray-coloured horns, slightly palmated, his wide cloven hoof, his thick brittle-haired hide, and his white-fat-covered haunches. As a sporting trophy I have never thought much of his head. The antlers he carries do not, in my opinion, approach for beauty those of the red-deer tribe, though they are longer, more curved, and with more points. His western relative, the caribou of North America, is a bigger beast, carrying a larger head; but even in his case the same remarks apply. Perhaps it is the inartistic colour of the horns that detracts from their appearance.

There is, however, no manner of doubt as to the excellence of reindeer venison, and it is usually extremely fat. To the uninitiated it is at first a puzzle how the reindeer, a fine lusty beast a shade heavier than the red-deer, can not only live, but thrive, in his rocky fjeld home, above the line of green forest and meadow-grass. The mystery is explained in two ways: first, by the nutritious character of the brown-looking fjeld-grass in summer, which partakes somewhat of the nature of the bunch-grass of the Rockies; and, second, by the reindeer moss already alluded to. This extraordinary vegetable grows, like a lichen, on the rocks of the high fjeld, and yet contains a kind of glue which is most nourishing. It forms the chief winter feed of the deer, without which they could not possibly live through a northern winter. How this fattening food is produced on rocks at such an elevation in a northern climate is one of those problems of

Nature that I do not pretend to explain or understand.

We left Hitteren, then—Bertram Buxton and I—towards the end of September, 1872, after our first meeting on that island, as related in a former chapter, in order to try our luck on the Dovre Fjeld.

From Throndhjem we journeyed some thirty miles by rail to Stören, which was as far as the railway went at that time, and thence travelled by carriole to Domaas, on the road to Christiania. At Domaas the road to the Romsdal Valley branches to the west. The first station down this road was Hoolaker, our base of operation and starting-point for the reindeer-ground, which stretched in rocky hill and corrie, with here and there a snow-glacier, for many a mile round Snaehetten, the highest point of Dovre Fjeld.

Our hunting guide and camp philosopher was Jordhai, a Norwegian of a superior class, who was a schoolmaster as well as a sportsman. He was Buxton's man, and knew the country well; had accompanied his party in Hitteren, and was a pleasant and well-informed companion besides, with some knowledge of the English tongue. A native named Ole Svanamyr was my particular hunter, whose services had been secured upon the spot—a kindly and simple-minded Norwegian, and a most proficient and keen-sighted stalker.

How well we get to know the men we hunt with! There is a sort of bond of good-fellowship at once established, a tie of equality and friendship for the time being created, which no amount of ordinary everyday service and acquaintance can produce. These men share with us the excitement and the ardour of the chase. The disappointment of the

failure or the joy of the success is theirs as well as ours. And as we, in the common endeavour of the sport, quickly learn their characters, so they often, in the hunt amid the mountains, read our very souls.

Rudyard Kipling put the matter clearly and with insight when he wrote:

'Who shall meet them at those altars—who shall light them to that shrine?
Velvet-footed, who shall guide them to their goal?
Unto each the voice and vision: unto each his spoor and sign—
Lonely mountain in the Northland, misty sweat-bath 'neath the Line—
And to each a man that knows his naked soul!
White or yellow, black or copper, he is waiting as a lover,
Smoke of funnel, dust of hooves, or beat of train—
Where the high grass hides the horseman, or the glaring flats discover—
Where the steamer hails the landing, or the surf-boat brings the rover—
Where the rails run out in sand-drift. . . . Quick! ah, heave the camp-kit over!
For the Red Gods make their medicine again!'

Ole Svanamyr and I were close companions for a week, and we parted the best of friends. The party of us, four in number, went up to a fjeld hut about twelve miles distant from Hoolaker, and stalked in couples in different directions every day with varying success. Our stay was necessarily short, owing to the late period of the season, and the possibility that a snowstorm might find us out, interfere with sport, and even make return to the valley difficult. It so happened on this occasion that, in coming across deer, I had a run of 'duffer's luck.' Buxton and Jordhai naturally took the choice of ground, for the origin of the expedition was theirs, and I was merely participating in it by mere accident of meeting with them, and as an afterthought. All the conditions for such

a run of luck were in my favour. With the exception of a red-deer stag—my first—killed on Hitteren a month previously, I had then done no big-game hunting of any kind. I was shooting with a short Snider carbine, a very inferior weapon to the express rifle, particularly at ranges over 50 yards. In addition to all this, while Buxton was an experienced rifle-shot, Jordhai was a fjeld hunter of great experience.

Therefore did fate naturally and sternly decree, by way of equalizing matters, and according to the universal law of compensation, that, wherever Ole and I went on the fjeld, we should always come across reindeer on that my first visit to the Dovre Fjeld; also that Buxton and Jordhai, in spite of the best intentions and the greatest forethought on their part, as well as on ours in their behalf, should almost invariably draw blank.

Let no man scoff at the idea of 'duffer's luck.' It is a factor in sport that is always to be reckoned with.

In a later chapter I give some instances of 'duffer's luck' in fishing. Many instances of a similar kind in the stalking line could easily be quoted. When my friend H. M. Denny first came out to Hitteren with his father, who was co-lessee with me of the Forest of Havn and Aune, on the morrow of his arrival on the island, and the very first day he put foot on Hitteren deer-ground—having had no previous experience of deer-stalking—he there and then at close quarters on Ram Fjeld came upon the biggest stag ever seen in Hitteren. I am glad to say his father, E. M. Denny, killed this same stag the following season, and a magnificent old deer he was. Also H. M. Denny killed one his first season, very nearly as good. But that particular old stag was not killed on the occasion

mentioned, and the strange part of it was that no rifleman ever got another chance at him that year, though he was known to remain on Ram Fjeld the whole season, where we constantly stalked, and where the men often saw him when we drove it.

The finest royal head I have known taken off Hitteren was killed by a farmer on an outlying portion of the island, where deer are seldom seen, the farmer himself being no hunter, and a very indifferent shot.

Therefore Ole and I saw plenty of reindeer in 1872. The very first day out from Hoolaker, *en route* for the hut, we came across our first good buck. It was late in the afternoon, and we found fresh tracks at the head of a rocky valley. In following them over a steep shoulder, I happened to be on higher ground than Ole, and suddenly over a ridge, and to our left, I caught a glimpse of a gray animal, with branching horns—clearly a reindeer, and the first I had ever seen.

I beckoned to Ole. He crouched down with the dog. We always had with us a trained Finn dog in leash, but on this occasion the deer had fed round in a semicircle, and the dog had missed their wind. I crawled up the ridge, and the buck, with some hinds accompanying, obligingly walked up on the next ridge, broadside on, in full view, not 100 yards away. Shaking with 'buck fever,' I fired hastily from the shoulder, and without a rest, and away ran the deer. We found drops of blood, but evidently the buck was only slightly wounded; for soon we saw him, with his hinds, going strong a mile or more away on a far hillside. So we returned to the hut in deep dejection, to find that Buxton and Jordhai had seen no deer.

For the next week the same run of luck prevailed. I saw reindeer every day, including one or two good bucks, but only managed to secure two moderate heads. Buxton also killed a small buck—the only shot he obtained.

We enjoyed magnificent walking exercise, in a most invigorating climate, and returned to Hoolaker just in time to avoid the first bad snowstorm of the season; but I felt that my account with the reindeer of the Dovre Fjeld was far from being satisfactorily settled, and was fully determined only to hold it in suspense for final adjustment on a future occasion.

Two years later, with a better rifle, a trifle more experience, and earlier in the season, I revisited the Dovre Fjeld on an organized expedition of my own. Jordhai accompanied me as hunter and guide, and my old friend Ole as general assistant. We went up from the same station, Hoolaker, this time to a mountain sæter, which Jordhai then considered to be better situated for our purpose, and for a month I enjoyed an open-air fjeld life.

It was in the month of August, and we had the advantage of good trout-fishing on off-days. The mountain lakes on the Dovre Fjeld hold very good trout, but unfortunately the natives, even in those days, used to fish these lakes heavily with that pernicious poaching instrument, the otter.

The story is that some guileless Englishman, in days gone by, introduced the otter to the notice of his Norwegian guide. It was an unhappy inspiration. The otter has since come widely into use among a people who, naturally enough, fish mainly for the pot, and in the lakes where it has thus been used rod fishing has been greatly injured in consequence.

It may possibly be asked by a reader, What is an otter? It can thus be described: Take a piece of deal board, say 3 feet long, 1 foot wide, and ½ inch thick; weight it cunningly with lead so that it floats upright in the water, submerged almost to its full depth. Then fasten four lines to it through holes bored in the wood, and so arranged that, when they converge a foot or two from the board to the point where the running-line is fastened to them, the board will swim through the water on the same principle as a boy's kite flies in the air overhead.

The running-line may be 60 yards or more in length. To it are fastened numerous trout-flies in short gut cast-lines. Then turn the otter loose in the lake, either from the shore or, better still, from a boat. Gradually pay out the line as the boat is rowed along the lake, or the holder of the line walks along the shore. The otter will then, if properly constructed, swim parallel to the boat or the man, the full length of the running-line away, the numerous flies meanwhile sweeping the surface of the water in between. Thus 60 or 70 yards of lake can be continuously fished in one process. The spring of the line gives the necessary play when the trout are hooked.

One afternoon I went out otter-fishing with Jordhai in a quiet mountain lake that is ultimately drained into the Roma Valley. We brought back a splendid bag of two-pound and three-pound trout that amply satisfied the requirements of our larder, while the method of their capture grossly violated my angler's instincts.

What I enjoyed far more was to fish with a small trout-rod the mountain streams which fed and also

flowed out of these lakes. One afternoon I caught twelve trout in one of these streams, weighing as many pounds, and could have doubled the bag had time allowed or circumstances required.

We did not see anything like the number of reindeer on that trip as on the occasion of my first visit. These deer have at times a habit of moving range from one fjeld to another, a circumstance which adds additional uncertainty to the sport of stalking them. For nearly a fortnight Jordhai and I saw no deer. Then came a memorable Saturday. We had both arrived at a stage of deep depression. To find and kill a reindeer buck had become a matter of serious, earnest business—something more than a mere question of relaxation and sport. So when, on the morning of the day I speak of, we sat on a lofty granite peak, and spied with our glasses three good reindeer bucks lying on a snow-glacier more than a mile away, our desire to make sure of a successful approach and kill amounted to a nervous and almost painful anxiety.

The ground was carefully studied and plans duly laid. We could approach down the steep hillside below us without fear of being seen, owing to the distance, to within half a mile. And then came the rub. An open flat had to be crossed. But Jordhai thought there might be a convenient hollow on one side which might give access to the deer.

So we started—the wind was right—came to the flat, and at first could see no way across without showing ourselves. It came at last to a crawl through and over 200 yards of stones—a crawl that I shall never forget. We left the dog behind tied to a rock, his muzzle fastened with Jordhai's handkerchief, and crawled accordingly. The deer lay in full view on

the snow about 600 yards away. Gradually and slowly, in serpentine fashion, at full length we wormed ourselves over the flat, yard by yard, until we gained the reverse of the hill on which the bucks were lying. Here for a moment we could stand upright. Then came the final stage of the approach. We were now within 150 yards of a long shot. The very rock was noted from which the shot might be taken, and on hands and knees we approached it. At this point the bucks must needs get up. Two were splendid beasts, with long branching horns. The third was a trifle smaller. Fortunately for us, at the edge of the snow were two or three large boulders, behind whose friendly shelter we managed to approach to within 160 yards or thereabouts. The deer were moving slowly across and away from us towards some feeding below. I hastily whispered to Jordhai, who also carried a rifle, to shoot at the leading buck with me. We slowly put our rifles over a convenient rock, and the next moment two shots rang out together. Both bullets struck fair behind the shoulder of the largest buck, who ran a few yards over the snow and then fell dead.

I next turned my attention to the other two, and fired three more shots from my single-barrel Henry express at the next largest of them as he ran up the snow-glacier. Jordhai did not fire again. At the top of the sloping white hillside the buck slackened his pace, and finally stood still. A second buck was too much to hope for, but we both watched him with anxious curiosity through our glasses. Then the buck walked on a few yards, and to our delight—for we were still bloodthirsty—lay down, while his smaller companion ran on and disappeared.

'We have them both,' said Jordhai. And so it happened. The second buck was shot through the body, and without difficulty was approached and killed.

Our spell of bad luck being broken, good fortune now came to us for a space in ample measure.

This had happened on the Saturday. On the following Monday I took the fjeld again, this time with Ole for a change, and a second time we killed two good bucks out of three.

A somewhat similar find was made. Three bucks were seen on the snow, and were successfully approached. On this occasion the final crawl was not so difficult as before. The deer were below on a snow-field that terminated in a steep declivity. For the last 100 yards I crawled on alone, leaving Ole behind with his dog, and presently found myself lying behind a convenient rock, with a good buck lying on the snow below me not 80 yards away. As I was getting the rifle into position I made a slight noise, and the buck sprang to his feet and stood facing me. I pressed the trigger, the foresight fair on his gray-white breast; there was an ominous click, but no report. The cartridge had missed fire. In nervous haste I dropped the block of the Henry rifle, withdrew the cartridge, and replaced it with a fresh one, as I lay full length behind the stone, the buck meanwhile—kind, considerate beast that he was—standing absolutely still, uncertain of the danger. It was only a few seconds' delay, no doubt, but it seemed hours to the man who wanted to kill that deer. The next moment the rifle spoke, and the buck lay dead upon the snow.

The remaining two bucks, who had been lying

down a little farther on, raced over the snow to an accompanying bombardment of rifle bullets from behind. As fate would have it, I broke the hind-leg of one of them with a lucky shot, and he half ran, half tumbled, over the edge of the snow-field into a deep valley below. We came to the edge of the snow and looked over; could see nothing of the second deer; thought of following him down the steep slant; hesitated; and finally, having butchered the first buck, we elected to go round. It was fortunate for us that we did so. At the foot of the slope was a small precipice invisible from above. Had we gone down the snow, nothing could have saved us from a nasty fall. We found the buck lying on the rocks below, and finished him with another shot.

Curiously enough, these were the only reindeer I killed that season. Four good bucks they were, and obtained in two consecutive days' stalking. The last fortnight of that trip, like the first, gave no chance at any deer worth killing.

The incident of the hidden precipice recalls another episode of the kind that happened in a following year. Again I was hunting reindeer near Snaehetten, and had had fair sport. One day the dog had winded deer, and we were following his lead along a steep hillside, and eventually spied two reindeer, one a large buck, lying in a corrie. Across our path was a steep snow-bank about 20 yards in width, which ended below us in a precipice some hundreds of feet in height. Ole, who was with me, hesitated to cross it, and was for going round. In my youthful impatience I seized the rifle and endeavoured to cross the slide. The temptation of the deer in front was

not to be resisted. The snow was smooth and hard. Halfway across I slipped, and found myself sliding downwards towards the precipice below. Instinctively I threw out my left hand, the rifle being in the right, and by a most fortunate chance managed to grip a point of rock just below the surface of the snow. Thinking over the matter afterwards, I can only believe that my left hand found that point of rock simply because my time had not yet come. A few more yards of sliding, at quickly increasing pace, would have taken me over the precipice, and so to certain death, on the rocks far down below me.

Having gripped the friendly point of rock, I gradually secured fresh foothold in the snow, then rushed the few remaining yards to the safety of the bare ground beyond; and now the excitement of the stalk resumed its sway.

Ole wisely stayed behind, and joined me after a long détour. Going on alone, I reached the mouth of the corrie, crawled up a burn, got a fair chance at the buck in question, managed a clean kill, and so the incident of the slip and the escape was happily put out of mind.

CHAPTER VI

ELK-HUNTING IN NORWAY

It is probably unnecessary to inform the intelligent reader that moose and elk are synonymous terms for the largest deer of the northern latitudes of Europe and North America. The wapiti, or giant red-deer of North America, is colloquially called elk out west, but is an entirely different and more graceful animal, with long tined, not palmated, horns. The moose, or elk proper, ranges, I am told, all through Northern Russia (though I have not been there to see), as well as in Sweden and parts of Norway; also, as is well known, through Canada, British Columbia, and parts of the United States, the finest known specimens of moose having been killed in Alaska. From a sportsman's point of view a good bull elk is worth some trouble to obtain. He stands 19 hands or so at the shoulder, weighs about 1,500 pounds—say from 90 to 100 stone clean—carries a massive palmated head, is dark gray to black in colour, knows well how to look after himself, and, with the exception of the large pachyderms of India and South Africa, is the nearest living approach to the big-game of prehistoric times. His peculiar characteristics are an enlarged, almost prehensile upper lip and nostril,

a low-carried head, high withers and great length of limb, also a small pendant of hairy skin under his throat, use unknown. His powers of scent and hearing—his main safeguard against hostile approach—are preternaturally acute, and he appears to have the power of going through thick cover in an extraordinarily noiseless and rapid fashion. His food is the leaf and young twigs of the birch, the bark, leaf, and twigs of the mountain-ash, and the young branches of the spruce-fir, the latter chiefly in the winter.

When I first visited Norway, some thirty years ago, there was no elk-hunting to be had in that country. Too much hunting, too short a close-time, and probably some poaching, had there reduced the stock of elk almost to the vanishing point; and the Norwegian Government, with more reason and wisdom than has been displayed by them in quite recent game legislation, enacted an absolute close-time for elk for many years, in order to save this fine wild animal from extinction. In spite of some continued poaching—chiefly practised, I believe, in Sweden, whence the elk range to and fro from Swedish forests to Norwegian valleys and birch-clad fjelds—this close-time has had its due effect, and for the past twelve years or thereabouts some fair sport with the elk has at times been obtained in Norway and Sweden, and some good heads secured by British and also by German and native sportsmen during the short season in September when hunting is now allowed. The present elk-shooting season in Norway is from September 10 to 30.

The weak part of existing legislation is that, though the number of elk allowed to be killed on each farm and Government district is strictly limited, yet no

distinction of sex is recognised; cows, equally with bulls, are allowed to be killed up to the number limit. One reason for this is stated to be that elk pair; but I find this difficult to believe, and it is naturally a statement almost impossible of proof. The bull elk, from my short personal acquaintance of his physique, appearance, and habits, does not strike me as an animal likely to be monogamous and a faithful spouse. The theory is also contrary to one's experience of the deer tribe generally. As elk are nowhere too numerous, the cows should, in my opinion, be strictly protected by law, and only bulls allowed to be killed, in order to maintain and increase the stock.

To come now to some details of the sport. In the year 1901 a combination of lucky circumstances brought me to the Gula Valley, intent on my first elk-hunt. I had long had experience of woodland stalking, particularly with red-deer and wapiti, but had never seen an elk, except in a picture, and naturally looked forward to my first bull with some keenness.

A word here on woodland big-game stalking. It is *sui generis*, a sport of its own, and to some extent requires different tactics and equipment, and even a different kind of skill in rifle-shooting to those and that of stalking in the open—such as in a Scotch deer-forest, for example, or on a reindeer-fjeld. In the former sport binoculars are generally preferable to a telescope, being handier and with a larger and lighter field. The use of a trained dog is often necessary. The game is usually not seen till well within range. It is more a game of hide-and-seek than of strictly scientific geographical approach, though the power of

reading game-signs accurately is essential. Last, but not least, the knack of shooting rapidly, as well as accurately, and at moving game, is necessary for success in woodland stalking. In the open stalk the game is seen perhaps for hours before a shot is obtained, which should be a quiet one at a feeding or lying animal unconscious of danger. In woodland hunting fresh signs may be plentiful, but the game is usually invisible until a few moments before the shot, which generally has to be taken at an animal moving or on the alert.

What a concentration of excitement is here when 'drawing the bead'! It may be the chance of a week or a season at a big beast for a coveted trophy, which if once missed may not occur again. The chance has come suddenly, perhaps unexpectedly. All depends on the accurate working of hand and eye within, say, a particular three seconds of time. To take good aim under exciting conditions, and yet to shoot quickly, requires some self-control, and also the training of actual experience of this form of sport, as well as a thorough knowledge of the weapon used. The tyro will either take a snapshot, as at a woodcock in cover, or else he will fail to get his piece off before the game has moved out of sight. Luck, it is needless to say, plays a considerable part in woodland sport at times. Big-game hunters are usually superstitious, and in many small ways pay homage to the Goddess of Chance. I had long known that elk-hunting in Norway, as well as in Canada, was an uncertain and somewhat chancy business. This, no doubt, is one of its attractions. Sportsmen of my acquaintance have hunted elk for years without getting a good head; and to go a fortnight or so,

or even a season, without a shot or a kill has not been an unheard-of occurrence among Norwegian elk-hunters. It was as well, therefore, to be prepared for disappointment.

We were a syndicate of three—a quadruped and two bipeds. First and most important there was Rover the dog, a prick-eared, curly-tailed, silk-coated Norske collie, whose keen nose and quiet sagacity found the game with unerring instinct. He was held in leash by Ivor the hunter, who knew the ground and had eyes like a hawk for hair or sign ; while the writer, the third of the trio, did the shooting with a double ·500 express rifle when opportunity, at uncertain intervals, came. Johan, the landlord, whose house overlooking the river was our headquarters and base of operations, also occasionally accompanied us. He knew the forest, wanted a supply of winter meat, and was desperately keen for blood.

Our stalking-ground was a large tract of Government land, about twenty miles long by ten broad, which I had somewhat unexpectedly secured at the last moment, carrying the right to kill four elk. It was not in a well-known elk district, and had not, so far, been regularly stalked ; nor had it as yet yielded the limit of four elk in any one season. The previous year a friend of mine—Lord Newton—had killed a good bull on the ground ; and it was through him that I first heard of the district as being good for elk.

The opening day saw us in the forest at an early hour. From the river-banks the valley was clothed with dense spruce-woods, gradually mingling with birch and mountain-ash, until, some miles back and 2,000 feet upwards, the forest changed to birch-wood and scrub. Here and there were open yellow marshes,

boggy and moss-grown. In the shade of the woods the ground was carpeted with moss and grass, while cranberries, blueberries, and bilberries grew in profusion, a constant temptation to the thirsty hunter. In places the fir-woods opened, and it was possible to see some hundreds of yards here and there. 'If I can only see a bull elk,' thought I, 'anywhere within range, surely I can kill him': a great brute 6 feet high, and with four times the vulnerable area of a woodland stag!

But pride goes before a fall. Within three hours from the start, where the forest changed on the higher ground into mingled birch and pine, we came suddenly into sight of a good bull elk lying down, and —I did not kill him. No fresh tracks had been seen, but, though Rover had in his own method given us previous warning of some kind of game at hand, it was an instance of a practically unexpected as well as a sudden chance. Following the direction of Ivor's pointing finger, I made out the dark outline and massive horns of the first living elk I had ever set eyes on. I can see him now. My rifle-bead was promptly on his shoulder as he rose, 100 yards away; but some demon of overcaution prompted me to dwell on the aim until he stood upright. It was but a question of seconds. 'He will stand for a moment,' thought I, 'and give himself away.' But not a bit of it. In the act of rising, and without a pause, he swung round the birch-trees, giving me but a snapshot at his great gray haunches, and was gone. He was obviously hit, for here was a splash of blood. We followed his trail for a mile or more; but the great hoof-tracks showing strong and deep, with gigantic stride and with no apparent check, gave no hope of a badly-wounded elk. We saw no more elk that day, and returned

home later on, a somewhat dejected trio. I relieved my feelings on the way back by putting an express bullet through a willow-grouse sitting on a tree, thus providing a meal for Rover; and further consoled myself by killing a seventeen-pound salmon in the river on my return. After dinner I spent an hour or so in vainly endeavouring to explain to the satisfaction of Ivor, the landlord, and myself why I had not taken the chance two seconds earlier 'on the rise.' The whisky-punch slightly alleviated the situation and soothed our feelings. But that bull was yet to be mine.

Three days later Rover, in the heart of the forest, informed us in unmistakable canine language that we had there and then disturbed an elk in his mid-day couch. There was the bed, and there the fresh gigantic track, which had been with me in imagination like a nightmare since the first day, showing that a good bull had heard us, or winded us, and departed, noiselessly and swiftly, unheard and unseen. For five mortal hours, led by Rover, we followed that track. Was he never going to rest? An eight-foot stride at least, and for six miles in a straight line, back to the hill where I saw my first bull. 'Can it be the same animal?' I thought. We gave him and ourselves an hour's rest for lunch, and so endeavoured to dispel from his mind all suspicion of pursuit. At last he has taken a pull. Yes, here he has walked, has bathed, has stood, has fed. We crawl gently on through dense birch cover. Rover is tired, and for once allows his attention to be distracted by a brood of willow-grouse. They get up in all directions, with a noise and flutter that, apparently, to our anxious senses, can be heard for miles. Our muttered

anathemas follow them. Ivor begins to eat berries, and I follow his example. Our hearts sink low. My rifle is twice the weight it was.

A little farther we proceed, and now the wood opens ; it is possible to see 100 yards or more, here and there. Now Rover quickens into unmistakable animation. Every fibre of his handsome dark-gray-coated body, his pricked ears, and sniffing nostril, tell us in language as plain as a printed book that he has winded, not spoor, but elk. Our advance is more cautious still. Suddenly, 'See here !' says Ivor, in a hoarse whisper, standing a yard in front of me and pointing past a spreading fir-tree with his finger. I spring a yard in front of him, and see through the trees, 160 yards or more down the hill, the great dark body we have for days been looking for. A single stride will take the elk out of sight. Fortunately, his head is behind a tree, and he has not seen us, though he may have heard something ; I control with difficulty the impulse to shoot standing, on sight. I sit down, elbow on knee, and draw a full sight on the black side. The distance is too great to take a free shot from the shoulder. I will run, for three seconds, the chance of his moving. It seems ages before I can get the bead steady on his side, before I can or will press the trigger. The smoke clears. Surely he moved very slowly away. We—Ivor, Rover, and I—run down the hill a neck-and-neck race to where he stood when I shot, and on through thick cover for 100 yards or so. 'Der han er !' says Ivor eagerly, as a great bull staggers out from under a thick pine straight towards us, with the will, though not all the power, to charge. The half-inch expanding bullet, driven by 5 drachms of black powder through

a Henry-rifled barrel, had done its deadly work. A second bullet in the chest, a stagger and a fall, and my first bull elk, a forty-inch thirteen-pointer, lies dead. He was my old friend of the first day, as the fresh thigh wound, plainly made by a ·500 bore bullet, that had just missed the ham-bone, showed.

We returned home that night in a most cheerful frame of mind, and the whisky-punch, at a subsequent stage of the proceedings, possessed a distinctly more satisfying flavour.

It required the combined efforts of two horses and six men for eight hours to bring the elk home four miles on a sleigh next day, accompanied by an admiring crowd of the valley population. We estimated his weight (clean) at over 1,500 pounds. I took his measurements as follows:

Height at shoulder - - -	6 feet 6 inches.
Length along spine from between horns to end of tail - - -	8 feet.
Length along spine from nose to tail	10 feet.
Girth behind shoulder - - -	7 feet 2 inches.
Spread of horns, from tip to tip -	3 feet 4 inches.
Points - - - - - -	13.

The following day our lucky star was again in the ascendant. Although we did not start early or work hard, all went well. The morning was spent in fishing a lake bosomed in the dark spruce-forest about two miles from the house. Above it was a steep and thickly-wooded hill, of which more anon. Ivor knew little or nothing of fly fishing, and watched with sceptical curiosity as I sat on the edge of the lake putting up a cast. The day was calm, and not a fish was moving. It did not look promising for a bag; but, as luck would have it, throwing into the water

to wet the line, almost at my feet, at the very first cast, a good half-pound trout rose, was hooked, and landed. Ivor burst into cheery laughter, and his doubts on the subject of fly fishing disappeared. A good breeze sprang up, and two hours' fishing from the usual leaky Norwegian boat resulted in a bag of sixteen trout averaging ½ pound. After a frugal lunch on the shores of the lake the rod was laid aside for the rifle, and the elk-hunting syndicate renewed active operations. Rover had been restless all the morning, evidently, as I thought, bored by the fishing. But within 100 yards of the lake, under the hill before mentioned, we came on the fresh tracks of a good bull. He had fed here this very morning, and in all probability was not far away, as Rover's keen instinct had doubtless already ascertained. We followed slowly on the fresh track, which gradually took us round and then up the steep hill. Here the bull had stripped the leaves of the birch-twigs ; there he had stepped up a rocky bank 6 feet high, apparently without an effort. Presently Rover led us, so to speak, from scent to view. We were on a ledge or terrace of the hill, and in front of us was an extra thick grove of fir. Through and beyond it I caught sight of a movement of gray hair, and then to the right, in more open forest, appeared a great bull elk, galloping swiftly and noiselessly away. He had heard us, and, of course, promptly remembered a pressing engagement on a distant hill. It was a quick chance at about 90 yards, and for a moment or two I had a fair view of his off-side quartering from me. I drew a quick bead and pressed the trigger.

As the report of my first barrel rang through the woods, the bull suddenly turned at the shot and

galloped towards the lake, giving me the opportunity of a second barrel at his near side, but with no apparent effect. He vanished in the trees, still galloping hard. Following the trail, we found it plentifully marked with blood. This looked promising for a kill, and Ivor became very sanguine. Knowing the chances of this kind of shot, I was more apprehensive ; but a lucky fate was with us that day. Some 500 yards down the hill we found the bull lying stone-dead. He had fallen in his tracks. Truly the vitality of these great deer is marvellous. One express bullet had raked his vitals from flank to shoulder. The other, as we afterwards found, had pierced his lungs from side to side. Yet he could gallop, as if unhurt, for a quarter of a mile before he fell. He carried a well-palmated head of sixteen points, with forty-two-inch spread of horn, and was a dark-coloured bull of about the same size and weight as the first, but with a better head.

Later in the day a procession of four returned home, the stalwart form of Johan, the landlord, leading the van with the head and horns of the bull balanced on his shoulders. We had decapitated our quarry and rowed over the lake with the head. The carcass was brought home later. Johan had undertaken to carry the head home a mile and a half downhill. He subsequently confessed that this task had taxed his powers to the utmost. Ivor advised as to the route, and carried the trout.

The affairs of the syndicate were now prospering exceedingly. Two good bulls had been obtained in the first week. Only two more to kill, and another fortnight of the season to go. This was too good to last, thought I, notwithstanding that successful

achievement had now thoroughly established confidence between rifle, dog, and men.

The next day the party went up to a sæter, accompanied by Gertrude, Johan's sister, a strapping fair-haired Norwegian lassie. Gertrude was housekeeper and cook. On arrival at this sæter, we found only one small hut available. A neighbouring hut that we had expected to use was locked, and Johan declined to enter it by force, fearing the wrath of the owner, although I offered to aid and abet in the house-breaking. I had come in tired after a long day in the forest, and wanted to bathe and change. My desire had only to be hinted, and the party, including Gertrude, all waited outside on the doorstep until my toilet was complete. 'Where were they all to sleep?' I ventured to ask Johan. 'In the hay-house,' was the prompt reply. I said no more on the subject, and took possession of the hut, with its solitary bed, which also served as kitchen and dining-room. The hay-house was a draughty wooden shed, some 10 feet square, half full of hay and birch-boughs, entered by a square hole halfway up its side, wherein two dogs, Ivor, Johan, and Gertrude, and also a casual male visitor who turned up for one night, all contentedly slept side by side during our stay. Nor did Gertrude or the men bring with them any change of clothing or personal luggage, so far as I was able to ascertain. Truly the Norwegians are a simple-minded and obliging people!

From this sæter we hunted the far end of the ground without success. Fresh tracks were occasionally found, generally of cows and calves or inferior bulls, and therefore disregarded, to Rover's intense disappointment and disgust. His canine in-

telligence, superior though it was, could not grasp distinctions of age and sex. For the next eight days, in spite of perseverance and hard work, we saw no bull elk. One day our ground was disturbed by a Norwegian ryper-shooter. Being Government land, all and sundry could lawfully go on it in pursuit of ryper and blackgame, although the public opinion of the valley was generally against such a practice, it being known that an Englishman had rented the elk rights.

The morning of one off day was spent in poaching trout. All severe-minded sportsmen should skip this portion of my tale. Close to our sæter was a mountain lake, some half-mile square, from which, up a clear fjeld burn, the trout were running to spawn. Beautiful trout they were, up to 2 pounds in weight, and very good eating, notwithstanding the late period of the season. I tried fly and minnow over them in vain. They were far too preoccupied, anxiously awaiting a flood which would not come, to look at any lure. But here were three able-bodied men, to say nothing of the fair and stalwart Gertrude, who desired fresh fish for change of diet, and sterner measures in order to obtain them were required and forthwith adopted. The means employed were a leister, thoughtfully brought from the farmhouse by Johan, who had evidently played the game before, a landing-net, and a long pole. All the morning, like a party of school-boys, we chased the trout in three or four clear burn pools not far from the lake, Ivor with the long pole guarding the shallows, Johan with the leister, and I with the landing-net. The result was a bag of half a score of speckled beauties, shared about equally by the net and the leister, that fed the party for three days.

It now became necessary to change our hunting-

quarters. The resources of the sæter were exhausted, and we returned to the house by the river, whence the more thickly-wooded portion of the ground could again be hunted. In this part of the forest was a very precipitous and densely-wooded glen, evidently a favourite resort, along its borders, for elk. Here and there I had seen along this glen the old elk-pits (*elg-grāves*), made by the natives a century or so ago for trapping elk. The outline of these pits was clearly distinguishable in every case. I saw four or five of them. They were about 12 feet long by 9 feet broad, and, though partially filled up, had probably been some 12 feet in depth, with sides so sloped that the bottom of the pit was broader than the top. Probably timber fences led up to them, on the principle of a wild-duck decoy, and they were concealed by branches of trees covered with moss and leaves, and made in likely elk-passes, by the glen already mentioned, or under some steep cliff between valleys frequented by elk. The elk would probably have been driven into these pits, unless they occasionally took the pass of their own accord. Once trapped, escape would have been impossible. It is likely that the pits were staked.

In the days before firearms were invented, one can well imagine the utility of these pits in providing the natives with elk-meat for winter use. On one occasion in more recent times (this was Ivor's story) a hunter had wounded an elk, which subsequently fell during the chase into one of these pits. A difference of opinion between the hunter and the maker of the pit as to the ownership of the elk led to the violent death of the pit-maker. No doubt this was a rough-and-ready method of deciding, in a primitive manner, what was really a very nice and difficult question of

ownership, and one that in our day would have given ample occupation to the lawyers. One would have thought that the more peaceable, and on the whole equitable, solution of the difficulty, namely, sharing the meat of the elk, might have occurred to the disputants.

The existence of these elk-pits in the locality I was hunting was clear evidence that the ground had been, from time immemorial, a favourite elk-range. Another reason, beside the legislative protection of thirty years ago already mentioned, for the recent increase in its stock of elk has been the incursion into Sweden of the Russian wolf. In severe winters packs of wolves hunt the forests of Sweden, and even cross the border into Norway, and thus drive the elk farther west. The railway from Throndhjem to Christiania acts as a barrier, so the natives say, to the wolf, who will not cross it, but not to the elk, who is not afraid to cross the metal lines. Thus, west of the railway a wolf-free sanctuary is created for the elk.

On our return to our headquarters by the river, thrilling news of a monster bull elk was brought to us from higher up the valley. An elderly native of highly respectable appearance vouched for the following facts: that a young farmer had been hunting on the ground adjoining mine; that he had twice encountered a bull elk of huge proportions and apparently ungovernable temper; that on the first occasion he had wounded the said bull with a Mauser rifle, whereupon the said bull had chased him back to his farm in a most vindictive manner, and his life had only been saved by his dog being slipped, thus distracting the attention of the infuriated animal; that he had again found the bull the second day, this time

in the company of a cow elk ; and that he had again been chased by the monster, after firing at and missing him ; but on this occasion only for a short distance, as the bull was unwilling to leave his mate. The native hunter's nerve (and ammunition) having now failed him, the services of the syndicate were requested. The hero of the story was subsequently interviewed and cross-examined. He had the hardihood not only to corroborate, but also to amplify all the foregoing details. Only four days of the elk-hunting season now remained, but I wanted to see some fresh ground, and determined to devote one day to exploring higher up the valley, and seeing what foundation, if any, there was for this Münchausen tale ; as a further encouragement, it was suggested that, as the monster bull had now secured a mistress, he would be in a pleasanter and less aggressive frame of mind.

Next day we carrioled about ten miles up the valley, met the young farmer by appointment to show us the ground, and were taken by him into what appeared to be perfect country for elk. Long stretches of gently-sloping forest of fir and birch, gradually rising to steeper birch-clad hillside and fjeld, gave us good hope of seeing the game we sought—even the apocryphal bull in question. At the foot of a steep hillside we found the fresh tracks of a good bull elk, which led us gradually upward to some thick birch-groves. The scent grew warm. The weather was still and fine, and we halted an hour for lunch, in spite of Rover's impatience, hoping to catch the elk feeding later on. Presently the advance was resumed with great caution, as the cover was thick ; the wind, however, was right. Soon it was evident that Rover had winded elk. After a false alarm, a fallen tree being

for a moment mistaken for an elk lying down, Ivor's quick sight discovered an animal couched in a thick birch-grove. My binoculars showed me that the square foot or so of gray colour I saw some 80 yards away in the cover was certainly some portion of an elk, but whether of bull or cow it was impossible to see. I took the risk of its being a cow, and, balanced on one foot on a steep hillside, put an express bullet in the centre of the visible patch of hair. The track we had followed was that of a good bull, and the event justified the risk. Had I waited to look too long, the chance might have been lost, for at the slightest noise the elk would have disappeared like a dream. As the smoke of the shot cleared away, a glimpse of a palmated horn and of a dark-gray body was caught sight of for a moment, and a heavy animal was heard crashing through the cover. The usual headlong race of the syndicate down the hill after the elk promptly followed, but another shot was unnecessary. A hundred yards away we came on my third bull in the agonies of death, with an express bullet near or through the heart. Everything, including a luckily-placed shot, had come off right. He was a heavy beast, but with an inferior head.

Peder, the farmer, was much delighted, for his share was half the meat ; and he promptly went off for a gang of horses and men to bring the carcass home to his farm that afternoon. But this was evidently not the big bull of the story, the one we were after, and the syndicate were not satisfied. However, no more elk were seen that day, except a long-legged cow whom we disturbed later on, and watched trotting for half a mile across an open fjeld to a distant valley. Her marvellously easy action

and lengthy stride as she covered rock, bog, and birch-scrub at a fifteen-mile-an-hour gait, were a treat to see, and largely explained how it is that elk can vanish away in thick cover, softly and silently like the snark (or was it the snark-hunter ?). This cow was the only elk I caught sight of in the open.

We returned home that night rather sceptical on the subject of the big bull. But the sequel remains to be told. Next day was devoted to hunting in the thick woods on my own ground. And a red-letter day, of varied incident, it proved to be. One end of a high fjeld terminated in a steep bluff overlooking these woods, round which bluff we had seen good bull tracks ; and had indeed, on a previous day, followed the trail of one phantom monster from dawn to dusk, first over the bluff and across the fjeld, and then back under it, without getting a shot or even a view.

I determined on a change of tactics, and went on alone to post myself on the bluff, whence a long and sporting shot straight downhill through the trees could be had at any elk taking that pass. The men—for Johan was out that day—were instructed, after a due interval, to hunt the thick woods underneath with Rover, on the chance of moving a bull who might go under the fjeld and past my butt. The unexpected, of course, happened. I duly reached my post of observation, and, after a casual glance at the woods stretched out for miles below, spent some moments in choosing a good seat and generally settling down for a couple of hours' wait at least, when, on again looking straight down into the trees below, there, a good 120 yards below me, was the dark back and side, now getting a somewhat familiar sight, of what was obviously a good bull elk. He had no doubt been

lying in the cover below, at my feet, so to speak, had heard something above him, and had risen, as yet uncertain what to do. I could not see his head, it was under a tree ; but there was no mistaking the body of a good bull. It was, moreover, an extremely sporting chance. In three days my time was up, and two more bulls yet to kill. My decision to take the shot and chance the size of head was at once arrived at. There was plenty of time to aim in this particular instance, the only difficulty being the danger of shooting over the mark, as it was almost straight down a perpendicular hillside.

During the next twenty seconds or so the reports of five consecutive shots from my ·500 express rang far and wide over wood and dale, startling Ivor, Johan, and Rover some two miles away, and bringing them hotfoot to the scene of operations. Shots Nos. 1 and 2 were taken with the finest sight on the lowest line of dark flank that I could see ; Nos. 3 and 4 as he moved a little, with a slightly fuller bead ; No. 5 as he was passing out of view behind the trees. Presently I heard the sound of a scuffle, a fall, a dying grunt under the shadow of the pines below me ; one bullet at least had found the mark. Then all was still, and I became aware of two more elk below me—a cow and a spike bull—apparently wondering what all the noise above them was about. After an interval they calmly fed on through the trees and out of sight. But the bull was surely dead. I waited, watching below me for the other members of the syndicate, who presently appeared, Rover straining at his leash. The following conversation, yelled in stentorian tones from cliff above to wood below and back, took place :

'Hallo there, Ivor!'

'Hallo there!'

'There is a dead elk down there in the trees, I think.'

A pause and a search.

'Her han er!' (Here he is!)—crescendo.

'Er han stor?' (Is he big?)—vibrato.

'En pen oxe' (A good bull).

With a light heart I descended by a long round-about scramble to the party below, and in the intervals of lunch related to a sympathetic audience, amid cheery laughter, the incidents of the find and kill. He was a fair bull, with a handsome though moderate-sized head. Two bullets had raked him downwards from back to breast. One had broken his thigh. Two had missed the mark.

The day was yet young, and more ground remained to be hunted. After lunch Johan returned for horses to bring the elk home, while Ivor and I continued towards the far extremity of our ground in search of the big bull. Then occurred a somewhat ludicrous episode. We had not gone far through the forest, when we heard the baying of a dog in the distance, well in the centre of the wooded hillside we were approaching, and away from all human habitation. Evidently some dog from the valley was out hunting on his own account—in all probability baying an elk. For a mile and a half, at least, we hustled along, till we approached a thickly wooded knoll, in the centre of which a dog was evidently baying something. An old bull elk for certain, thought we, held at bay by a Norwegian collie. In some parts of Norway this has been—though now forbidden by law—a not uncommon and fairly successful method of elk-hunting. The

bigger the bull, the more readily can he be held at bay by a dog who understands his business and does not approach the elk too closely, while the hunter creeps up within gunshot and slays him. But in this case an elaborate sell was in store for us. Creeping slowly on, soon I saw a remarkably handsome young collie barking under a tree for all he was worth. No elk was in sight. The game, whatever it was, was evidently treed. The dog welcomed our arrival with a wagging tail, and redoubled his noise and exertions to reach, if you please, a squirrel—a common or garden red squirrel—frolicking on the topmost bough of a small spruce-fir. It was for this, forsooth, we had traversed a mile or more of forest and marsh in record time—in fact, almost at the double—with rifle at the trail and ready loaded. The humour of the situation, and the good looks and pleasant manners of the culprit, saved our tempers. It was apparently a hopeless case of canine debauchery and demoralization.

We returned homewards through a long stretch of fir-wood, thinking all sport over for the day, but in this respect were agreeably disappointed. Towards evening, after a long tramp, and not three miles from home, on a densely-wooded ridge, Rover suddenly winded elk. We followed his eager lead for a few hundred yards. It happened to be an easy approach, along a level stretch of moss-carpeted forest, directly up wind. Suddenly we passed from scent to view. Ivor, of course, saw the elk first, feeding in a thick patch of trees not 80 yards away. I caught sight of a large gray side, but it was evidently a cow. A bull, we knew, was there, although we had seen no tracks to judge by, for the rutting season had commenced ;

and even our dull olfactory nerves had, for the last 100 yards of our approach, told us plainly of the presence of a bull. The position was now exciting. I could see a cow within easy range; knew a good bull was there, but could not see him; and also knew that a false movement or unlucky mistake on our part might scare the game without any chance of a shot. Presently I caught sight over a small pine-tree of a palmated horn. The cow had fed into full sight, and I did not dare to move, nor did I like to wait; and so, somewhat rashly, I fired through the tree where I thought the body of the bull should be. Through the smoke I saw a good bull gallop hastily round the tree straight towards us, and then suddenly turn and follow the cow, who had, of course, made off. Whether he first intended to charge, then suddenly changed his intention in order to follow the cow, I am unable to say, but his action looked remarkably like it. Just as he turned, my second bullet caught him fairly on the end of the spine, and he dropped, paralyzed, to the shot. A final bullet through the neck finished him, as with hair erect along his crest he rose on his fore-legs and made frantic efforts to attack us.

We found no trace of my first shot at him through the tree. It had probably been deflected by a branch, or was a clean miss. Low down in the flank we found an old Mauser bullet wound. This, then, was the monster bull from the neighbouring ground that had driven Peder back to his farm, and whom we had now evidently disturbed in his amours with his mistress. A dissipated old ruffian of a bull he looked, showing all the signs, to more of our senses than one, of having recently led a riotous and dissolute life.

He was of large size and long in the limb, with one heavy palmated horn of eight points and one deformed horn, that had apparently been injured in some way during growth. It was also clear, from the condition of his teeth and from his general appearance, that he was an old bull, who for some years had 'gone back.'

I have alluded to the chances of woodland sport. This concluding episode of my season's elk-hunting was an instance in which pure luck played the leading part in a successful find and kill. We had passed within a mile of these elk in the morning without knowing of their presence in the forest. It was evident that they had been in the same locality for some days, or the infallible Rover would never have passed their tracks. We had crossed the wind above them just too far to give it. It was pure chance and nothing else that we returned in the evening just below the elk on a side-wind, and so approached them undisturbed. But so it happened, and thus the old bull met his fate. Our tale of elk was now complete. The limit of four bulls had been killed on my rented forest, supplemented by a fifth from the neighbouring ground. Johan's bloodthirsty desires were fully satisfied, and his larder, with those of some other deserving natives of the valley, well supplied with winter meat.

Two days later the syndicate was dissolved by mutual consent, but its members parted with that permanent sense of comradeship which combined and successful endeavour, in sport as in other affairs of life, always gives.

I returned home across the North Sea with a pleasant and lasting recollection of three weeks' successful elk-hunting in the spruce-forests of Norway.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE GULA VALLEY

We left Hull early in September, 1902, for a fortnight's elk-hunting in the Gula Valley. By 'we' I mean my friend Alec Henderson and myself. We had leased a stretch of Government land on the west bank of the Gula River, supplemented by an adjoining farm that rounded off the forest on the south end, in all some twenty-five by ten miles of spruce-forest, birch-scrub, and fjeld. As related in the foregoing chapter, I had killed five bulls on this ground the previous year, hunting alone for three weeks on a sort of trial trip, and this season we hoped to do as well or better, although our time was shorter, as we were two rifles instead of one, and had a season's experience of the ground.

The hope was not altogether fulfilled, largely owing to the weather. In September, 1901, Norwegian sportsmen enjoyed a phenomenally fine autumn, mild and dry—the best possible weather, in fact, for all kinds of shooting, though no doubt anathematized by the late anglers, who wanted water, and plenty of it. In September, 1902, entirely different weather conditions prevailed. An unnaturally cold summer was followed by a cold and rainy autumn. Heavy snow

fell early in the month, and lay for many days, and drifted to some depth on the higher fjelds. This circumstance alone increased tenfold the difficulties of approaching in cover that wily and sagacious animal the old bull elk, the crunching of the frozen snow under our feet constantly giving us away. But we managed to get a couple of bulls, all the same; and had certain rifle bullets been a trifle more accurate in their flight, another couple at least of these great deer would have been added to our bag.

Four days after leaving Hull, we—that is, the good ship *Tasso*—steamed up Throndhjem Fjord, and dropped anchor about noon in the harbour of the historic Scandinavian capital, where for centuries a line of Viking Kings have come to be crowned. The modern advantages of a telephone and a railway enabled us to make all our arrangements for stores, etc., that afternoon, to enjoy two square meals at the Hôtel Britannia, and to reach our happy hunting-grounds that same evening, by what purported to be the fast night (7.15) mail-train south. This meant for us a leisurely run of fifty miles or thereabouts in the dignified time of three hours or more along the Throndhjem-Christiania Railway, up the banks of the rushing Gula (Yellow) River, one of the great streams that drain the western watershed of the backbone of Norway into Throndhjem Fjord.

We reached Singsaas about 10.30 p.m., and found our henchmen awaiting our arrival on the platform. There was Johan Bergan, landlord and general utility man, also Ivor Hugaas, Peder Kirkvold, and Hans Aasen, hunters, each with a curly-tailed Norske collie on a string. Hans Aasen was an extra, and came from the farm already mentioned on the south end. He

only accompanied us on occasions on his own ground. The other men were our regular hunters.

For the next fifteen days we tramped through forest, marsh, and over fjeld in pursuit of the elk we had crossed the North Sea to kill, took in ozone and health with every breath, and worked off the last traces of a London season's enervation.

The first day we had a drive on the north end of the ground. This meant sending two of the hunters to walk some miles of forest, while A. H. and I, under the guidance of Peder Kirkvold, lay in wait in the likeliest woodland passes. Elk do not 'drive' in the ordinary sense of the term, and have ideas of their own as to where they will go when disturbed. They can certainly be moved by one man, but only intercepted by another if wind be right, plans well laid, and, above all, if fate be propitious. At best it is a chancy business. The old bull is not always where he ought to be for the purpose, and on this occasion the drive did not come off. We saw two cow elk we did not want to shoot. Ivor lost himself for several hours, and we returned home admiring the scenery, and reflecting that a successful elk-drive the first day out was more than ordinary mortals could expect.

Next day we moved fifteen miles up the river to Johan's house, our headquarters, in the centre of the ground. After that the weather fairly broke, and tramping spruce and birch woods in a snowstorm was a constant experience. What a game of hide-and-seek this elk-hunting is !—or, rather, let me say, a game for us, but a deadly earnest business for the elk. Tracks, and large ones, we saw nearly every day, but for some time we could not get on terms with the animals at all.

One morning, in company with Peder and Johan, I found an exceptionally large bull-track, absolutely fresh, not two miles from the house, and thought our chance had come. A more restless, wandering brute I never followed. He was just in front of us, apparently, for many hours. His track, going at a walk, looked in the newly-fallen snow as fresh as our own ; but we were not destined that day to catch a glimpse of him, even for a moment. In vain we tracked him for hours with the dog—up hill and down dale, through gloomy forest recesses and open glades, over and round the sides of a steep and thickly-wooded mountain. The phantom monster never showed. At length, in desperation, a new move was tried. Peder's handsome, headstrong collie, who had been in a fever of excitement all the day, was slipped, in the hope that he might bring the bull to bay. Within 200 yards we heard a welcome barking—up a steep hill, of course—and nearly broke a bloodvessel trying to get there in record time, only to find the tracks of bull and dog making a bee-line over the ridge and down the farther side. The barks died away in the distance—obviously, this particular bull did not bay worth a cent—and presently the dog returned, exhausted, with wagging tail, tired of the pursuit. We followed the track for a mile or two, and found that the elk, this time at a steady fifteen-mile-an-hour trot, had left for distant parts, evidently disgusted with our proceedings. I have often wondered how much that bull knew of our pursuit of him up to the unlucky moment when we slipped the dog. He was obviously a big brute, from his track.

Next day A. H. and Ivor had a somewhat similar experience. They disturbed their bull lying down in

Good Elk Ground.

Skylungen Lake.

H. S. K. and A. H. Homeward Bound.

the thick woods south of the steep cañon—of which more anon—early in the morning, and followed him with bloodthirsty intent for the rest of the day, without ever catching sight of his dark, hairy hide. This artful animal actually made a complete circle round his pursuers, and having thus ascertained their nature and object to his entire satisfaction, and accurately diagnosed the situation, slipped away through the thick woods for a distant point, without giving any chance of a shot.

A day or two after I moved to the south end of the forest, while A. H. went up to the sæter, in order to try the higher ground. He was accompanied by a retinue of his own, including Ivor, Johan, and Carrie the housekeeper (Johan's sister). Carrie was young and fair. I contented myself with Peder and Ole, the chef.

Next evening the welcome news arrived that A. H. had killed a good four-year-old bull the first morning out. It happened thus: He and Ivor had tramped through snow towards the head of the valley for a mile or two without sign or sight of elk, and were seated on a convenient hillock spying the opposite fjeld, when to them entered a bull elk from the depths of the cañon below. The country here was more open, interspersed with patches of thick birch-scrub, and the elk had emerged unexpectedly from one of these patches 120 yards away. The next moment his career was terminated, before he could rectify his mistake, by a bullet from A. H.'s rifle. It was a happy and a lucky incident and a clean kill. A. H. admitted that he was entirely taken by surprise at the elk's sudden appearance, while Ivor, with a professional reputation to sustain, said he had heard the

animal on the snow before it came into sight. This still left the fact to be explained away that Ivor continued to spy the opposite fjeld until A. H. directed his attention to the animal in question.

I saw no elk on the south end worth the killing, and shortly after A. H. and I paid a second visit to the sæter, intent on a final serious hunt. Our first day out was eventful. A. H. and Peder on the lower beat spied a good bull on the farther side of the valley, feeding in the scattered birch-scrub. To reach him from where they were it was necessary to cross the deep cañon which divided this part of the ground for some miles from east to west. This meant sliding down 150 yards of precipitous pine-clad hillside, wading thigh-deep through a rapid mountain torrent swollen by melting snow, and climbing on all fours laboriously up the equally steep farther side. All this being accomplished in record time, they proceeded to stalk the bull, but he had moved into thicker cover, and when found gave only a difficult snapshot, and was not seen again.

Curiously enough, it was also destined that Ivor and I, on the higher beat, should likewise this day, in the ardour of the chase, wade the same torrent and cross the same valley. We reached the shoulder of the fjeld which overlooked the highest dale of all exactly at the psychological moment when it had occurred to three elk to move from the distant birch-scrub straight in our direction. Nothing could have been more fortunate, thought I, as I sat on the snow and watched through the glass the three great deer, looking coal-black against the white background, gradually move towards us through strips of birch and scattered pine. One was a bull—not with a large

head, it was true, but still a fine shootable beast. I moved warily down the hill for some yards, followed at a distance by Ivor and Rover. I settled comfortably in a cool snow-patch behind a birch-tree ready for the shot, while Ivor sat on Rover's head to keep him quiet, the elk meanwhile being hidden behind the scrub, and made certain of that bull.

Alas for human hopes ! Presently the head of the leading cow appeared for a moment over a birch-tree 150 yards away. She gazed inquiringly in our direction, and promptly moved up the hill behind the strip of cover, instead of coming straight on, as an innocent and well-conducted elk should have done. Then I caught a glimpse of the bull's side through the trees as he stood for a moment. I could for that moment have killed him, but waited for a better chance, which never came. A few seconds later, more by sound than sight, I knew the elk were running. They had seen something, or a treacherous current of wind had given me away. I ran a few yards up the hill, caught sight of a moving gray shadow a long shot away, half hidden by birch-trees, and fired, ran on again, fell into a snowdrift apparently yards deep, struggled out, scrambled through the birches, and there, a quarter of a mile away, saw my bull going slowly over the skyline.

We found the trail and buckets of blood. Such a blood-trail on white snow I have seldom, if ever, seen. Ivor made certain of a kill, but we never saw that bull again. Sufficient to say that we followed the trail over the fjeld down to the steep valley, over the stream, and for miles up and over the fjeld on the other side, and on till dark, without result. I must have shot him high on the point of the shoulder and

into one lung—the blood evidently came from the nose—but too far forward. I have no doubt he eventually recovered. Ivor and I returned to Johan's house that night, having gone too far down the main valley to recross the stream and reach the sæter, somewhat weary and depressed.

On our last day we tried a drive, this time with success. Eight men swept the woods at the south end, with the result that a three-year-old bull, with his family, undertook to pass within 100 yards of my post in the forest, and paid the penalty with his life. Another bull behind him turned back at the shot, and passed through the drivers. The following day we left for Throndhjem and home.

The following season—1903—we paid yet another visit to our elk-forest. Alec Henderson was unable to get out until September 12, when the elk season had already opened. But his brother, Captain Harold Henderson (2nd Life Guards), with his wife, Lady Violet Henderson, accompanied me to the Gula a fortnight in advance, in order to try and give some late Gula salmon a chance of being caught.

The weather, as it happened, was fine and bright, and the water rather too low for successful sport; but we managed to kill a dozen salmon and grilse during the last ten days of the fishing season, mostly with prawn and worm, to be strictly accurate.

The fly was given every chance, but for many days the few fish that there were in the water would not look at it.

A week before our arrival on September 1 the Gula had witnessed a record flood, the marks of which we saw high up on its banks, and it was re-

marked that there were fewer fish to be seen, and fewer fish were caught the whole length of the river after the flood than before it. The native theory was that this strong flood had washed all the salmon out to sea again. The conception had the merit of being original, and might have been prompted by the desire of the inhabitants of the Gula Valley to maintain the reputation of their river. Personally I have never heard of salmon being washed down a river against their will. Without attempting to dogmatize about it, I recommend the point for examination by experts.

The year 1903 was a lemming year in Norway. This meant that the whole countryside was infested with the small black-and-yellow-fur-covered rodent, about the size of a small rat, that is known as the lemming. In every bunch of grass and heather, under almost every rock, was to be found a lemming, chattering and highly indignant if disturbed or interfered with, ready to go for anything or anybody on the slightest provocation, and a source of continual joy to every Norwegian boy and dog. The little animals also provided a perpetual feast for the hoodie crows, which swarmed everywhere, and for the hawks and owls. The lemmings had been drowned in thousands by the big Gula flood already mentioned, and the river-banks were heaped with the carcasses. There is no doubt the Norway lemming is a periodical nuisance, when he breaks out, as he does at intervals, in these extraordinary numbers, for he eats a large amount of grass, occasionally pollutes the water, and also attracts vermin. There is even such a thing—so the natives say—as lemming fever. One peculiarity of the pest is that its hordes move continually west—for what reason or in obedience to what instinct

who shall say?—and so eventually perish in the North Sea.

H. H. and I went up to Aasen Farm to open the elk season a few days before A. H. appeared upon the scene, but at first we were not fortunate enough to see any bulls big enough to shoot.

The southern march of the forest was defined by a steep-sided, thickly-wooded valley or cañon, impassable in places, and on the further side of which, off our ground, news was brought that a good bull had been seen.

The Gula farmers are thoroughly respectable and law-abiding folk ; and when our guileless hunting staff assured us that, although we might not go beyond the march ourselves with the rifle, it was quite etiquette for them to go there, and so, perhaps, to drive the reported bull over the boundary into our own ground, we did not dispute the point. As a matter of fact, the ground in question was common land, where no farmer in particular had shooting rights.

The first day out H. H. and I went our separate ways in our own forest, but saw only cow elk. The simple Hans Aasen was deputed to search the country beyond the cañon, and put the wandering bull across to us.

The only party to the proposed transaction who did not see the matter in its proper light was the bull himself. He was there, of course. Hans found him without difficulty, achieved an artistic stalk, and watched him, as he lay in the forest, a fine beast with a good head, chewing the cud within easy range. When finally disturbed, instead of coming to our ground he went over the open fjeld, as we afterwards ascertained, and away to distant valleys far from our ken.

Such are the fortunes of forest hunting. The bull elk did not always play the game as we understood and planned it.

The last day of his stay H. H. went for a long hunt, in company with Ivor and the invaluable dog Rover, from Aasen, right down to Johan Bergan's house at Langlete, through some of our best elk-ground, without getting opportunity for a shot. Two fair bulls were at different times followed, and caught a glimpse of; and one would almost certainly have been approached, and probably shot, but for the untimely interference of a domestic cow from a neighbouring sæter. Next day A. H. arrived from England, and H. H. and his wife were obliged to leave for home engagements. Before doing so, however, H. H. killed two good salmon in the pool below Johan's house, one of which weighed 20 pounds.

During the next fortnight or so A. H. and I secured two good bulls, and might have shot one or two smaller beasts had we so desired.

We enjoyed, moreover, the most perfect autumn weather I have ever known in Norway. Day after day for nearly three weeks we were favoured with blue skies and brilliant sunshine, under which the varied colours of heather-covered fjeld, yellow marsh, birch-wood and dark-green pine, were lit up in all their northern beauty, and appeared in quite a different guise to what they may assume when Norway weather breaks and the sky is dark and gloomy. Under the former conditions it is a joy to be alive in that bracing latitude; and if, perchance, a successful chase and kill be added to the pleasures of landscape and of climate, then indeed, if only for

a spell, the lot of the hunter is an absolutely happy one.

One of the bulls we killed carried a head 48 inches in span, which is good measurement for Norway. He was, moreover, of the lighter-gray-coloured, slightly-more-leggy variety, with longer spikes and smaller shovel to the horns, a good specimen of which we had not yet obtained, and therefore all the more welcome in the bag.

A splendid beast, in truth, he was, just under 20 hands in height at shoulder, and at least 15 hundredweight of flesh and bone and sinew. In imagination I can see him still, as he came trotting, and whiles galloping, through the trees, and then again as he fell stone-dead in his tracks to the strong, compelling order of a half-inch expanding rifle-bullet over the heart and through the spine. For, to tell the truth, I killed him in a drive.

We had tramped the forest for some days without a shot. Cow elk there were, no doubt, in fair plenty to be seen, and now and then a young bull—both of a kind we did not want. So we held a council of war after dinner in our Laerdal hut. The Ordnance map was thoughtfully consulted. Ivor, Peder, and Johan all took part in the discussion, while Rover whimpered in his sleep before the fire, as if dreaming of the big bulls he never tired of tracking.

Thirty-six hours later saw A. H. and myself posted in a thick belt of wood on the north side of Laerdal Cañon, awaiting events. A brilliant northern sun lit up the dark shades of the pine-woods, the open forest glades, and the distant fjelds. The lemmings played around us as we sat, rifle on knee, with every sense alert and on the watch. Some ten

"He galloped straight to where I sat."

drivers, under the leadership of Johan and Peder, were sweeping many miles of hill and forest, while Ivor, on the flank, was guarding a possible outlet.

All Nature smiled on us that day; but we were intent on killing, if only the Fates to us were kind and the opportunity should come in the shape of a good bull elk disturbed by the men from his mid-day couch, and so driven past our ambush.

For an hour or more we sat. A. H. was in the thicker trees close to the deep cañon. We thought it the more likely pass, but destiny otherwise decreed. I sat on the outer edge of the belt of cover. To my left was a wide open marsh, over which it was unlikely that elk would break. In front of me was a stretch of more open wood, through which I could see for a few hundred yards.

Presently to me appeared, not an elk, but a man. It was one of the native drivers, who had apparently gone wrong. He was long before his time. The rest of the men were a mile or more away. The simple-minded native, one of those engaged for the day, had kept his appointed line of country, but had come along too fast, and far outstripped his fellows, and so unwittingly had run a chance of spoiling everything.

Then deep depression seized me by the throat. All our plans were naught. How could any self-respecting bull follow or cross a fresh human track, and so face an unknown danger. Silently I beckoned to the erring driver, pointed sternly to the rear of us, and so whispered him to hide himself and then be still.

In spite of this mishap, I thought it just possible an elk *might* yet come through the thicker trees to where A. H. sat, and took some comfort in the

thought. But to my post, in front of which the man had tramped, never. But the impossible happened.

Another half-hour passed. I heard the occasional tapping of the drivers in the distance. Then suddenly, in the more open wood in front and to the left of me, I saw a great gray body appear, moving quickly through the trees. As I silently cocked my rifle, on he came, and I saw with thumping heart that he carried a fine wide head; clearly it was a great bull elk.

The crisis of the drive was on, and over, in a few moments after that. The elk was evidently frightened badly. He had tried to break past Ivor, got his wind, and turned just exactly as we had designed. He galloped straight to where I sat, then turned his full broadside at 70 yards as he headed for the thicker cover to my right, gave me the fairest possible chance of a right and left into his vitals, and the next moment fell dead with a crash.

CHAPTER VIII

MY FIRST TRIP TO THE ROCKIES

Fresh from Oxford, I was walking down the Strand in the spring of 1876, when I saw a fine pair of wapiti horns in the window of a gunmaker's shop. Wapiti heads were not so plentiful in London eight-and-twenty years ago as they are now. The size and beauty of that particular head, the first of its kind I had seen, fairly astonished me. A year or so before I had killed my first red-deer stag in Norway. But here was a tined trophy that threw all possible red-deer heads into the shade and aroused my most bloodthirsty instincts.

Why is it, by-the-by, that the size and beauty of wild stags and other big-game arouse in certain individuals this lust to kill? In this civilized age this sequence of cause and effect may, to some minds, be difficult to understand. Place some educated and otherwise humane person, of the class I refer to, on a Scotch hillside, a Norwegian fjeld, or on the pine-clad slopes of the Great Divide, with express rifle in hand, and a good stag, a fine reindeer buck, or an old wapiti bull in sight, and he will straightway be seized with an inordinate desire to slay the animal in question. This desire will increase in direct pro-

portion to the size and beauty of the beast and the difficulties and exertion entailed in its pursuit. It possesses at times all sorts and conditions of men. I have stalked and hunted with Scotch gillies, with Norwegian natives, with western trappers, and even with Red Indian chiefs, and I have noticed that the manifestation of this desire, allowing for individual and racial differences of temperament and training, is always the same. The western trapper is usually profane, and the Red Indian taciturn. But the lust to kill is shared by all, accompanied by more or less suppressed excitement, and an absolute indifference to all physical toil and exertion involved. I have known a middle-aged and respectable London magistrate crawl for 100 yards or more at full length through wet moss hags and peaty bog, drenched with perspiration and shaking with excitement, in order to obtain a shot at a 'stag of ten.' I have known an Oxford graduate lie for hours on a Norwegian snow-fjeld waiting for a chance at a reindeer buck.

Failure or success in either case meant bitter disappointment or lasting joy, and it was a question of taking the life of some beautiful creature. The mere desire to obtain venison or a good head does not satisfactorily account for these phenomena. We are driven to the conclusion that civilization cannot efface man's predatory instincts, and that the pursuit and slaughter of wild game is a perfectly natural, healthy, and widespread trait of humanity, even necessary, in some cases, for health and happiness, and probably intended as an antidote to the purple and fine linen, and the sumptuous fare, of refined civilization.

To return to the wapiti head in the London shop-window. I there and then made up my mind to visit the country where wapiti were to be found, and to bring back, if possible, similar trophies of my own killing. I was fortunate enough about this time to meet Mr. Otho Shaw, who had recently returned from a hunting expedition to Wyoming, whence he had brought back some good wapiti heads. From him I obtained an introduction to the western ranchman, Frank Earnest by name, who had accompanied him as hunter and guide. All necessary arrangements for guides, horses, and camp outfit were, accordingly, made beforehand by post, and in July, 1877, my friend Thomas Bate (of Kelsterton in North Wales) and myself left Liverpool in the White Star liner *Germanic* for New York, *en route* to the happy hunting-grounds of the Far West.

Those were the light-hearted days of early manhood, when one's hat covered one's family, when letters and telegrams were few and far between, and when no cares of any kind, domestic, financial, or political, occurred to trouble the serenity and happiness of life. In Thomas Bate I had a congenial companion, whose acquaintance I had made a year or two before in a sporting trip across the North Sea to Norway. The glamour of the Far West was in our minds. That roving instinct of the race that has driven so many of the Anglo-Saxon breed to distant parts of the earth, either for sport, for exploration, or in search of gold, had seized us in its grip, and we simply had to go, and in going enjoyed to the full those feelings of pleasure and freedom that usually accompany obedience to the promptings of all healthy natural instincts.

'Now the Four-way Lodge is opened, now the Hunting Winds are loose;
Now the Smokes of Spring go up to clear the brain;
Now the young men's hearts are troubled for the whisper of the Trues,
Now the Red Gods make their medicine again!'

Who hath tracked the antlered monarch thro' the forest's leafy mazes?
Who hath heard the bull elk calling ere 'tis light?
Who hath chased the shaggy bison—met the savage charging grizzly,
*With the soft-nosed bullet's swift death-dealing flight?**

'Who hath smelt wood-smoke at twilight? Who hath heard the birch-log burning?
Who is quick to read the noises of the night?
Let him follow with the others, for the young men's feet are turning
To the camps of proved desire and known delight!'

From start to finish our four months' trip was a glorious kind of school-boy picnic, one of those—alas! too few—episodes of one's life in which the realization fully came up to anticipation, and the pleasant flavour of which has never faded from my mind.

We slipped across the Atlantic in the then record time of nine days, making love to some charming American girls on the way; spent a panting, perspiring twenty-four hours in a hot August wave in New York; thence travelled by the Pennsylvania Railroad to Chicago; by the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad to Omaha, and thence by the Union Pacific Railroad across the Missouri River and gradually up through Nebraska into Wyoming, at the giddy pace of seventeen miles an hour, until we reached Fort Steele, on the North Platte River, 6,000 feet above the sea and 5,000 miles from home.

* My apologies are due to Mr. Kipling for inserting these four lines of my own between the two quoted verses of his.

Frank Earnest, our guide, philosopher, and friend of the trip, was on the platform to meet us, as ourselves and impedimenta—guns, rifles, ammunition, and portmanteaux—were unceremoniously bundled out of the No. 1 West-bound train, at three in the morning, on to the primitive platform of the station of what was then a small military post. In Frank Earnest we had been lucky enough to engage a westerner of the right sort. He was a Canadian who had left his Toronto home as a youth, and had passed a wild and somewhat chequered early manhood in hunting, trapping, and occasionally scouting in the small Indian wars that Uncle Sam was in those days constantly engaged in. He had now settled down as a ranchman in a small way in the valley of the North Platte, about twenty miles south of Fort Steele. There was nothing in the detail and necessary paraphernalia of camp-life that he was not familiar with—from choosing a camp and shoeing a horse to frying a venison steak and baking in a camp oven. And, above all, he possessed that sterling pride and sense of duty that prompted, and even compelled, him to do his level best to show sport to two raw British 'tender-foots' who had employed him to that end. Good old Frank! he has now joined the majority. He died suddenly in 1892 of heart disease while engaged in his favourite pastime of fishing. But on that August morning I commenced an acquaintance with him which rapidly ripened into a firm and lasting friendship of many years.

We spent a day or two in Fort Steele preparing for the trip. Stores of various kinds had to be purchased, ponies tried, and such-like details attended to. Our party consisted of Thomas Bate and myself;

Frank Earnest and one Jack Roberts, our hunters; and a boy, Bill Perkins by name, who drove the waggon that carried our tents, stores, and personal luggage, and did what he was pleased to call the cooking. Bill was a hash-slinger of the most primitive description, though in our cases a western appetite served to cover a multitude of culinary sins. In a weak moment I presented him one day with a cookery-book brought out from home. It was shortly consigned, and perhaps with some show of reason, by Bill, amid a shower of profanity, to the depths of the nearest brush. Every recipe in the book appeared to commence with 'Take so many eggs,' and these were an item of grocery not available in a western hunting camp.

A few days after our arrival at Fort Steele all arrangements were completed, and our cavalcade of a waggon, four riders, and a bunch of spare horses started for a two months' hunting-trip north of the Union Pacific Railroad into a part of Southern Wyoming then comparatively unknown and little hunted.

The first night we camped on the North Platte River some twenty miles from Fort Steele, and enjoyed our first venison steak. I had been fortunate enough that afternoon to kill an antelope in the open country near the river, and from that day on our camp was always supplied with the best of fresh meat—antelope, black-tail deer, or elk. A party of soldiers, with the General in command, accompanied us, much to Frank Earnest's disgust, for some part of the way, and camped that night about half a mile from us up the river. A commissariat waggon, well aden from the canteen, was part of their equipment,

and, from the cheery noises that floated down the breeze to our ears after dark from the military camp a few hundred yards away, it was clear that, as Frank remarked, theirs was not a 'teetotal outfit.' Next day we gave them the slip, had a long and hot day's travel to the north side of the Medicine Bow Mountains, and on the third day after leaving the railroad we pitched our first hunting-camp in a grove of mingled cotton-wood and pine trees by the side of a clear mountain stream running out of the range behind us.

At the present time this country is a huge sheep and cattle ranch. The river-meadows and streams are for the most part wire-fenced. Flock-masters, with their herds and travelling waggons, pass over it to and fro, from summer to winter range, and the wild green pastures of the seventies are now a thing of the past, eaten up, trodden down, and periodically desolated by the thousands of domestic sheep that have largely added to the wealth of Wyoming, but have, on the other hand, ruined a large part of the State (it was then a Territory) as a game-preserve and a hunting-ground. To the sportsman and naturalist the foot-hills of the Wyoming Rockies and the mountain valleys of the North Platte have now, alas! largely lost their interest and attraction. But in the days of which I write Wyoming was a hunter's paradise. Every day and all day, as we travelled over sage-clad rolling prairie from Fort Steele, past river bottom and rocky bluff, we had seen antelope in small bands watching us curiously from a distance or galloping out of sight in a cloud of dust. In the wooded valleys and in the cotton-wood groves along stream and river black-tail deer were numerous, and

before us was the Medicine Bow range, in and around which elk ran in their thousands.

Of all the varieties of western game, the prong-horn antelope of the plain is, perhaps, the most sporting. In those days they were ubiquitous on the rolling prairies and among the foot-hills of Wyoming. Hard to approach, quick-sighted and fast, they afforded not only good venison, but the best possible rifle practice. There was, in fact, no better school in which to learn the use of a sporting rifle. One could generally ride to within a long shot—say 300 or 400 yards. An old buck's curiosity would usually detain him a few seconds, and so give the rifleman a standing chance. I have often, where the shot was a long one, put in a successful second barrel after getting the range by seeing where the first bullet had struck the dusty plain. On the other hand, I always found it extremely difficult to get a standing chance at antelope at anything like point-blank range. The small-bore cordite-powder rifle had not then been invented. It would have been an ideal weapon for the plains antelope, owing to its flat trajectory and long point-blank range.

Some of the western trappers and ranchmen of the 'seventies and 'eighties used to earn a living by supplying railway camps with antelope venison, and, as a result of constant practice, were among the best rifle-shots I have ever seen or heard of. It was just the case of the professional as against the amateur—of work done for a living, as against the practice of a pastime. I have known indifferent amateur shots spend a day among herds of antelope, and spend dozens of cartridges without touching a hair; while a bag of twenty or thirty antelope was not an un-

common morning's work for an old hand when the Union Pacific Railway was being laid.

An old western ranchman and hunter of my acquaintance, still living on the North Platte, once killed seven out of a small band of eight antelope in as many shots with a Winchester magazine rifle, the first as it stood at over 100 yards, and the remaining six as they galloped madly away. This man was the prototype of Mayne Reid's or Fenimore Cooper's old Indian trapper of school-boy romance. He was born, so to speak, with a rifle in his hand, and possessed that marvellous instinctive skill with the weapon that comes, I suppose, from natural aptitude developed to its highest possible efficiency by constant use. I have seen him rake a single elk from stem to stern with a bullet from an old Ballard rifle at over 400 yards, and do it with assurance, thinking nothing of the feat, and fully expecting to accomplish it. When I say over 400 yards, I mean that full measured distance, and any sportsman who has drawn a bead on wild game, standing end-on in a rough country at that distance, will know what the ordinary chances of missing it are, particularly before smokeless-powder small-bore rifles were invented.

'How do you do it, Al?' I once asked this man.

'Wal,' he replied, 'I don't exactly know; but,' he went on, 'I guess I can always place my bullet where I want to.' And in his case this statement was no idle boast.

We had arrived, then, at our first hunting-camp. Tom Bate and I had expended a fair amount of ammunition on antelope *en route*, and had kept the larder going. But now we had reached the elk

country, and the more serious business of the trip was about to commence.

It may be opportune here to write a word on the nature of the great deer we were about to hunt.

'What is the size of an elk (wapiti)?' it may be asked.

A fully-matured wapiti bull will turn the scale at from 60 to 75 stone. These figures are necessarily an estimate, as there are no scales in a western hunting-camp. But our men were used to judging the weight of live-stock, and we all of us could form a fair estimate of the weight of dead game. It is as much as two able-bodied men can do to turn a dead wapiti bull over for skinning purposes.

A good head usually carries from twelve to fourteen tines—in exceptional cases up to eighteen tines. It will measure up to 60 inches, and sometimes more, along the curve of horn. A sixty-inch head is usually considered a first-class specimen.

The following are the dimensions of a wapiti bull taken by myself as he lay dead on the ground. He carried a twelve-point head—on the whole the best head I ever killed, though I have secured others with more points and more weight of horn, but not so long.

Height at shoulder - - -	5 feet 4 inches.
Girth behind shoulder - - -	6 feet 2 inches.
Length along curve of horn - -	61½ inches.
Beam, or circumference between bay and tray - - - - -	8 inches.
Span - - - - - -	52 inches.
Points - - - - - -	12.

The antlers, as all sportsmen know, are deciduous. Falling off some time in March (the exact month is, according to some authorities, a disputed point), they commence to grow again almost immediately, and are full grown by the middle of August.

I have met men who have found it difficult to believe that any animal could grow such a length and beam of horn in three or four months. It was evidently a strain on their credulity. Two 'globe-trotters' on one occasion, in my hearing, were disputing as to the number of years it must have taken to grow a particularly fine elk-head of eighteen points ornamenting the outside door of a saloon in a frontier town on the Union Pacific Railroad. Finally they appealed to a westerner standing by, a well-known local sporting authority. 'Wal,' drawled he, 'I reckon that is a good head; it probably took pretty nigh *four months* to grow!' The travellers without another word turned away to their train, putting down their informant at once as a western liar of the first water.

To return now to the incidents of our first elk-hunt, which occurred on the day of our arrival at that first hunting-camp. It was a lovely August evening. Bate and I had ridden on ahead of the waggon. To our right was a steep mountain range, pine-clad, rocky, the hunting-ground of our dreams. Ahead a long green fringe of pine and cotton-wood trees ran out into the plain, marking the course of a mountain stream. On the steep bank beyond, among the green timber, presently, to us appeared the movement of a tawny-red body. Then three great magnified red-deer, antlered, graceful, dignified, walked out on to the ridge beyond the trees, stood for a moment at gaze, and, evidently not liking our looks, made off at a stately trot along the plain at the foot of the mountain. Here, then, were the bull elk of Wyoming, the first we had set eyes on, and that we had come some 5,000 miles to hunt and kill. We were both well mounted on two good western ponies. Bate

was on Spotty, a young piebald 14.2 Indian pony of fair speed and substance. I was riding Fox, a black American-bred fifteen-hand horse of somewhat better quality. The next moment, by a common impulse, we were galloping after the three bulls as hard as the nags could go.

I have since had many a run on horseback after elk, but this was one of the best of the kind I have ever enjoyed, and it possessed all the charm of a first experience. It so happened that the hills to the right were very steep, and the point the bulls were making for was a thickly-wooded ravine some three miles ahead, that ran down from the range above. They had about a quarter of a mile start of us, but we steadily gained ground, my horse Fox in particular having a very fair turn of speed, while both horses were well used to running wild cattle.

We had a glorious gallop over three miles of open prairie, and presently a procession arrived in hot haste at the ravine. First the three bulls, now pressed into a gallop, plunged into the valley, antlers thrown back and flanks heaving; then, 100 yards behind them, Fox, who had outdistanced Spotty, was pulled up on the edge of the cover. I threw myself, rifle in hand, headlong from the saddle, and sat down ready to shoot at the first sight of the game we were after. Bate, on Spotty, rode up an instant later. Below us we heard the elk crashing through the trees, and soon they came into sight ascending the far side. The roar of two double rifles promptly conveyed to the boys then pitching camp three miles away the news that fresh venison for supper was more than likely. We killed the largest bull, a good twelve-pointer, missed another in the trees, and returned to

camp, as the western sun was dipping below the horizon, at peace with all mankind, and with half a haunch of fat venison tied behind Fox's saddle, for Spotty strongly objected to carry any kind of game. So our first bull elk died. Surely these are moments worth living for—hunting recollections that never fade from the mind!

We had a cheery supper in camp that night. The weather was fine, and we made our beds on the prairie beneath the starry sky, having come in too late to put up the tents. Thereby hangs an incident of my tale. Next morning at sunrise we were awakened by the dulcet tones of our *chef de cuisine*, and, rising from the blankets, I saw before me one of the prettiest sights imaginable. A large herd of elk were just entering the mountains. They stood grouped about 200 yards distant, chiefly cows and calves, their tawny-yellow bodies lit up by the rising sun just showing over the horizon, stared for a moment at our camp, and then made their way leisurely into the timbered hills. That particular herd contained no bull worth the killing. The old bulls in August eschew female society, and prefer to run alone. But I shall never forget the beauty of that picture of the sunlit mountain distance, with its graceful living foreground of elk.

After breakfast we started on our first day's regular hunting, Frank Earnest and I in one direction, Tom Bate and his hunter, Jack Roberts, in another. Frank and I rode over the range through a beautiful succession of gamy-looking hills and wooded valleys, saw plenty of elk-sign, an odd deer or two, and some antelope, but no game worth the killing until well on in the afternoon.

We had turned homewards toward camp in the bend of a wide circuit, and were ascending from the lower ground up a steep valley, when my eye caught sight of what looked like a fine pair of branching horns sticking out of a marshy flat some 200 yards ahead. I was riding behind Frank, and gave a low whistle to attract his attention. At that instant the antlers turned slowly round, and I became aware that nothing less than a good bull elk was lying there. The next moment seven great tawny-red deer, each carrying a more or less splendid head, rose majestically from their couches in the marsh, gazed for a moment on the intruders on their privacy, and then proceeded somewhat leisurely up the steep hillside in full view. We had disturbed a company of old masters in their chaste August retirement.

The events of the next few moments will never fade from my memory. I sprang hastily from the saddle, ran a few steps up the hill for a better view, and, as Frank subsequently explained to the boys in camp, pumped lead for all I was worth from a double ·500 express rifle at the seven great bull elk slowly making up the hill. The range was about 200 yards, and I was lucky enough to put a bullet through one of the biggest of the bulls the first shot. He did not fall at once, but stood. The rest remained with him for a few moments, and thus enabled me, with the expenditure of several cartridges, to get two more bulls before they made off. One of these two, I remember, happened to be struck in the neck, and fell dead at the shot and rolled over down the hill like a gigantic rabbit. The other two stood *in articulo mortis* until I rode up and finished them.

The next moment I was gazing with admiration and delight, and at the same time, I will confess, with some feelings of compunction, at the three magnificent bulls lying dead within 50 yards of one another. The size and beauty of the animals, their fat and sleek condition, and the weight and length of the antlers they carried, simply amazed me. Previous to that season I had killed nothing bigger than a red-deer stag. Here were threefold-magnified specimens of, to all intents and purposes, the same animal, carrying antlered trophies of a length and weight beyond my most sanguine former anticipations. In addition to this, here also was about 25 hundredweight of the finest fat venison in the world lying at our feet, only a very small portion of which our camp of five able-bodied men could possibly use before it spoilt. Hence, no doubt, my feelings of compunction. All three of these bulls were mature twelve-pointers. One carried the heaviest head I have ever killed, measuring over 9 inches in circumference of horn between bay and tray. Another bull had a head just under 60 inches in length.

We got back to camp late that night, after butchering the elk and taking off their heads. Two fat haunches, each one as much as two men could conveniently lift, were hung on a tree for camp use.

Tom Bate had also found a large band of elk, and killed a moderate-sized bull, but had not been fortunate enough to come across any old patriarchs.

Next day we moved our tents a short distance up into the timber, choosing a place that had formerly been used as an Indian camp. We found their old lodge-poles lying about, and also some arrow-heads. To us ignorant Britishers these were merely interest-

ing curiosities. Our men looked upon them in a somewhat different light. The Custer massacre, in which a large force of Uncle Sam's 'boys in blue' had been surprised and exterminated by an Indian force in Western Wyoming, a single survivor alone returning to tell the tale, was then recent history; and one evening I surprised our chef Bill in a burst of improvised profanity over some of these interesting relics.

I have occasionally wondered why an Indian success was usually described in those days as a 'massacre,' while a win by the United States troops was always 'a glorious victory.' It is true that the Red Indian tribes gave no quarter. This was their custom in war. 'Prisoners of war' had no meaning for them. Death on the field of battle or subsequent torture was the penalty of defeat and capture at their hands. But, after all, the white man was the aggressor. He was in the process of taking this fair new continent by force from its original and rightful owners; and he could not logically complain if the red man fought, *more suo*, in defence of his own. But more of these Indians anon. On this particular trip we were not troubled in any way by the rightful owners of the soil, and of the game thereon, though a few years before that date our lives would, in this locality, have in all probability possessed a very small insurable value.

We camped for a fortnight at the foot of the Medicine Bow range, and led an ideal hunter's life. Game was plentiful and easily found. Antelope were always in sight on the open ground north of the range. In the wooded mountains south of us elk ran in their thousands. I often used to see a herd strung

out for a mile or more along the mountain ridges. Occasionally the forest would literally smell of them. The difficulty in those days was not so much to find elk of sorts, but to come across the old master bull or patriarch, whose splendid antlers were the coveted trophy. As a matter of fact, the large herds of cows and calves frequently proved a nuisance, occasionally preventing us from finding or getting a sight of the big bulls we were after. Later on in the season, when 'whistling' time had begun, and the master bulls were running with the herds, and making the welkin ring and resound with their whistling roars, the task was easier. I give some of my experiences of autumn hunting later in these pages. Meantime we had to do plenty of riding through wooded mountain valleys and glens for the monarchs that we sought, and very often came upon them by the purest chance, and in the luckiest way imaginable. The size of the country, and its altitude, some 7,000 feet above the sea, rendered stalking on foot a laborious and generally unprofitable exercise until the game was actually sighted. Experience of this western country has always prompted me to sympathize with the proverbial westerner who would always walk 100 yards to the stable to saddle a horse in order to ride across the street. I know no more helpless feeling than to be left afoot some miles from a western camp. Man then realizes what a miserable crawling biped he is, and what an enormous advantage it is to have four sinewy legs beneath him for locomotive purposes.

We once had occasion to dismiss at short notice from our service the 'boy' who had been engaged to do our cooking on a hunting-trip. This was in later years. His views on the free consumption of

the camp whisky differed radically from our own. His summary dismissal entailed a seventeen-mile walk back to the nearest ranch on foot. The dismissal was nothing. But the enforced walk made him our enemy for life.

We hunted somewhat casually in those days, as I have already intimated, and we trusted largely to luck—and 'straight' powder when the opportunity came. What hunter is there among the sons of men who does not believe in luck, who does not pay homage in numerous small ways to the Goddess of Chance? So many little events or accidents may happen, over which mere human foresight or forethought can have no control; so many chances of route or wind or weather may occur that will decide or influence success or failure, as the case may be, that to some extent the hunter is bound to be superstitious.

One of Louis Stevenson's heroes, I think it was, once left it to the spin of a coin to decide a fateful choice of route in an unknown land—a spin that in his case meant all the difference between life and death; and this he expressly did 'to show his scorn of human reason.' Most sportsmen will sympathize with the feeling that prompted so bold a challenge to chance or fate. The big-game hunter who works the hardest, who has the greatest knowledge of the range and habits of the game he is after, and, above all, who shoots the straightest when the opportunity comes, will no doubt in the long-run achieve the best results. But, nevertheless, the 'race is not always to the swift,' nor 'the battle to the strong.' Is it a deity or a demon, I wonder, who appears so constantly to interfere, either in humour or

in spite, with the sportsman or the object of his pursuit ?

I have sometimes spent days in riding through rough woodland country without chance of a shot at the kind of game I wanted, though game of the kind I did not want were plentiful enough, and appeared only too anxious to be shot at.

I have spent hours at times, in the rutting season, manœuvring round a band of elk in thick green timber, in the vain attempt to get a shot at the big bull I could hear, but could not get a glimpse of; until at length, impatient, one would recklessly show one's self to the herd, or they would get the wind, and away would go 500 red-brown deer, cows and calves calling and squealing, crashing and thundering through the forest, and out of ken in a cloud of dust. At other times I have got into game that I wanted with the greatest ease, and in the most unexpected manner. Some of my finest trophies of the chase have been secured in this way, and at a time when I had thought I was in for a blank day.

One morning Frank Earnest and I rode over from our Medicine Bow camp to a solitary ranch the other side of the range to get some tea, a grocery of which we had run short. For a few days previously I had had no sport worth mentioning. Returning from the ranch late in the afternoon of a fine August day, we were riding round the base of a rocky hill, having seen no sign of elk, when a low whistle from Frank behind me attracted my attention. I glanced round, and, following his eye and pointing finger, saw a splendid pair of twelve-point fifty-eight inch antlers just visible over the near skyline above me. A grand old bull elk was lying on the hillside about 200 yards

above us, his horns giving him away. I sprang from my horse, snatched the rifle from its sling, and hastened up the hill. A few steps over the brow would take me into sight and shot.

The find was an exceedingly lucky one. We had ridden casually into the shot and the wind happened to be exactly right for us and wrong for the bull. Then a ridiculous contretemps occurred. What chance had given me with one hand was nearly—but not quite, as it happened—taken from me by the other, and through my own clumsiness. I was nervously fingering the trigger and hammer of my rifle, and by some mischance touched the wrong hammer and trigger together. Both barrels of the weapon went off, and so did the astonished bull. Never before or since can I plead guilty to such a mistake.

My temper was now fairly up. Hastily grabbing the rifle from the ground—it had flown out of my hands from the recoil—I dashed, breathless, over the ridge and in the direction the bull had taken, loading as I went. Fortunately, the ground was fairly open, and as I came over the first ridge I caught sight of the bull elk standing, for a moment, on the far side of a deep valley he had crossed. I remember thinking what a magnificent picture he made as he stood on the top of the ridge in full view, at gaze, his head well up, glancing back, no doubt with mingled surprise and scorn, at the puny-looking intruder into his privacy. Behind him, in the distance, stretched the ragged peaks of his mountain home. One spring over the near ridge would take him into the depth of a wooded cañon and out of my sight. He was 200 yards or so away; I was

A FAIR 12-POINT BULL.

THE SCENE OF THE KILL.

ON A SIXTY-MILE RIDE.

breathless with the run uphill, and aggrieved at the mischance that had lost me a 'sitting' shot. I did not expect to get him. But I pulled myself together, took a quick sight from the shoulder—all I had time for—at the broad yellow side, pressed the trigger just as the graceful body turned, and the next moment the elk had vanished over the ridge.

Had the bullet sped true? That was the question. The rifle was unsteady, I knew, when, as a panting, perspiring biped, I had drawn the bead. But somehow I fancied there was hair on the foresight at the exact psychological fraction of an instant when the bullet left the muzzle of the rifle.

Here, mark you, was the opportunity for fate to give me back, at the last moment, the success so nearly snatched from my grasp. For I wanted that head, and wanted it very badly. I had come some thousands of miles to get it, and others like it. Therefore, to lose it by mishandling my rifle at an inopportune moment would be a most vexatious disappointment.

Frank joined me with the horses, and I saw a twinkle of amusement and humour in his eye; but 'You blew a big hole in the ground back there' was all he said. My immediate reply is not worth recording, but I went on to suggest that the elk was probably dead by this time, and that we might as well go and get his head. It took us a quarter of an hour or so to cross the steep valley to the point of the ridge where the elk had vanished. *He* had crossed it, as Frank somewhat unnecessarily, as I thought, pointed out, 'in about three jumps.'

A few minutes after the sun was shining brighter, all Nature seemed fairer; the plainly humorous

nature of the whole incident became fully apparent to my mind; for there, 100 yards beyond the ridge, in the valley below, lay my friend the bull elk, stone-dead in his tracks, with a bullet through the heart. I never fired a luckier shot. 'I reckon that bull's time had come, any way,' said Frank.

And so we took the tea—and the recollection of a fortunate hunting episode—back to camp; and next day brought the head in, one of the finest in my collection.

But it was not always thus. Fate occasionally was much more 'contrairy.' It was on one of these unlucky days that I rode out alone, on another occasion, to look at some coyote traps we had set at the carcass of an elk. The locality was among some open glades or parks on the summit of the range, surrounded by thick belts of green forest, an ideal place for game. On coming to the edge of the particular park where the trap had been set, I saw a coyote tearing at the meat. He had apparently sprung the traps without getting caught. Leaving my horse in the trees, I crept up within shot. Just as I was pulling the trigger, the wolf, either hearing or winding me, galloped off. A hasty double shot as he ran away broke his hind-leg, and without waiting to reload I ran forward on foot, thinking to finish him with my revolver. Then, as I ran into the open, I became aware of a magnificent old bull elk, one of the finest I have ever seen, trotting majestically out of the pine-grove on my right. He crossed the open park in front of me within easy range, making for the thick forest beyond, not 100 yards away. Oh, supreme mischance that I had neglected to load my rifle! His appearance was as

AN OFF-DAY.

A GOOD HUNTING CAMP.

sudden as it was unexpected. I grabbed hastily, and, of course, in the wrong pocket, for a cartridge. I could not take my eyes from the splendid brute in front of me, retreating rapidly, but gracefully, to the harbour of the pine-trees so close at hand. Finally, jamming a cartridge into the breech of the rifle, I just had time, and no more, for a long snapshot, as the old bull, with spreading antlers well laid back on his haunches, disappeared into the thick cover.

I never saw him again, though the grand head he carried dwelt long in my memory. Meanwhile the wounded coyote had made good his retreat. But my cup of disappointment was not yet full. Riding slowly back to camp that night, enjoying the friendly solace of a pipe, I came across a small band of elk, feeding quietly in a convenient hollow in the forest. They were accompanied by a fair-sized bull, though nothing like the patriarch I had just seen and missed. Leaving my horse, I this time accomplished a scientific crawl, and obtained an easy shot at 100 yards. It was getting dusk, and I must have sighted a thought too high, as the sequel will show. At the crack of the rifle the bull fell prone, legs kicking in the air. For the moment my bloodthirstiness was appeased. I went back to my horse and proceeded to lead him down to the prostrate bull, who had fallen close to a thick belt of young pine-trees and was still kicking spasmodically. As I came within 10 yards or so, he suddenly regained his legs, and forthwith plunged headlong into the thick timber before I could drop rein and raise my rifle. He vanished from my ken, and I have never set eyes on him since. He had been simply creased, or shot too high, just above the backbone. The effect of such a shot paralyzes for

the moment, but recovery is rapid. An irritated and despondent sportsman returned silently to camp that night.

We had now been in one camp for about a fortnight, and it became advisable to move elsewhere. Bate and myself had secured several good elk-heads apiece, as well as a few antelope, and a deer or two for the larder. September had begun, and the weather was somewhat colder. We struck camp and moved, in a three days' journey, to the foot of the Rattlesnake Range, beyond which a few buffalo were known to range, and there we enjoyed our first run after these shaggy, characteristic—now, alas ! exterminated —big-game of Western North America. The pursuit and the kill were exciting enough, for the experience was new. We shot two fine old bulls and took their heads and skins, which formed a good pack for two spare horses led for the purpose, and after that were satisfied to leave the buffalo alone for that year.

On a subsequent hunting trip to the Bighorn Mountains, described in a following chapter, we ran buffalo on horseback till we tired of the sport, and might have killed hundreds had we desired to do so. I have been content with half a dozen or so, all told. An old bull buffalo, after the first novelty of his pursuit had worn off, always appealed strongly to my compassion. The ferocity of his shaggy-fronted appearance was at first appalling, but in reality was an imposture of the most transparent kind. A good horse could always run down a buffalo in a mile or so, and the animal was then at the rider's mercy. The buffalo possessed neither the activity of the elk nor the natural weapons of the grizzly. Once only do I remember failing on horseback to catch a

buffalo. It was down a long stretch of gently-sloping prairie, and I ran my favourite horse to a standstill without getting within shot. Up any kind of hill his heavy fore-hand rendered a buffalo useless in front of a horse. His size, moreover, and his dark shaggy coat made him conspicuous and easily picked up at any reasonable distance on the prairie. Concealment was out of the question, as these animals always frequented the open. I have heard of the Rocky Mountain wood-bison, but I never saw one.

I have to confess that I once photographed an old bull buffalo as he stood mortally wounded and full of impotent fight on a stretch of Wyoming prairie. This was a year or two later. The 'boys' on horseback formed an appropriate and sympathetic background. The deed was deliberately done and with purpose aforethought. I do not attempt to palliate it. We were coming into camp one afternoon, when a buffalo was seen grazing in a hollow a mile or so away. We stalked, wounded, and ran him to a standstill in a couple of miles. The cook galloped in the rear with the camera slung on his back, and after some slight display of impatience on the buffalo's part, a charge on the camera being even attempted, his portrait was duly transferred to a plate. This done, he was promptly slain, again photographed, and his head now adorns my home.

Though the disappearance of the buffalo, from a strictly sporting point of view, is not so important; yet from a zoological, and even a commercial standpoint, it is a thousand pities that these unique wild animals have been so ruthlessly and wantonly exterminated by a sometime reckless and democratic civilization. Crossed with domestic cattle, they

might have formed a permanent source of wealth to the western stock-grower, while they completely harmonized with and were fitted for the natural surroundings and the climate of the west. Their disappearance has permanently detracted from its wild natural life and its attractions.

So we killed our first buffalo in 1877, and went south again to Whisky Gap—euphonious name—in the Ferris Range of the Sweetwater. But before we left the Rattlesnake Mountains the first snap of autumn weather caught us, I remember, in its grip. We had killed our buffalo—the brace of bulls aforementioned—in the open country north of the Rattlesnake; had been some time taking their heads and hides and packing them on the led horses; and were perforce compelled to spend the night in a mountain hollow, with such shelter and sustenance as our blankets and a tin of corned beef could provide. That night a storm of snow and sleet completed our discomfiture, and a very sodden, chilled, and dilapidated party returned to camp next day.

At Whisky Gap, two days south, we met Sir John Rae Reed and a friend, also on a hunting expedition, and compared notes on our respective sporting experiences. Sir John Reed has joined the majority, but I can well recall to mind a pleasant night passed in his camp. He gave us an introduction, I remember, to Sothern, the actor, then performing at New York with his company in the play of 'The Crushed Tragedian.' Two months later we availed ourselves of the introduction, when waiting in New York for our steamer, and passed one of the most laughable and amusing evenings I have ever enjoyed at supper with the celebrated comedy actor.

In Articulo Mortis.

But to return to the Ferris Range. The 'whistling' season for elk had now begun, and we had, as Jack Roberts remarked, all the fun we wanted with the old bulls. In those days they came down into more open ground when running with the herds of cows, and, occupied as they were in bellowing defiance at and in fighting with one another, in the intervals of guarding their respective harems, gave themselves freely away to the hunter. We only molested the mature old bulls, and of these secured several more good heads apiece. One day Tom Bate got three fine bulls, one a fourteen-pointer. Towards the end of September we returned to Fort Steele to replenish our stores and to make a further expedition south of the railroad.

So far we had seen no bear nor big-horn sheep (*Ovis montana*), nor any black-tail buck really worth the killing. Bear-sign we had seen once or twice, and one night we had sat up at a kill, but to no purpose. The range grizzly of the west had so far eluded us. Frank Earnest had also undertaken to show us a Red Indian camp, in order to complete our western education.

Accordingly, a week later found us camped at the head of Jack Creek, fifty miles north of the railroad, on the Main Divide of the Rockies. Here we accomplished one part of our design by killing a fine old range grizzly in a somewhat inglorious manner. The forest cover was thicker and more extensive on this part of the Main Divide than in the country further north that we had come from. It was known to be a favourite range for bear, but they were difficult to find in the rocky timbered fastnesses of their mountain home. In order, therefore, to provide for all

contingencies, a bear-trap was thoughtfully borrowed by Frank from a friendly ranchman as we drove up the North Platte River.

Before I come to relate the particular incidents of this bear's death—the first grizzly we had so far set eyes on—a general word on the range grizzlies of the Rockies may not be out of place.

The range grizzly, under which term I include the cinnamon and the silver-tip, is the characteristic bear of the Rockies. All these bears possess the grizzly characteristics—namely, a big head (in the literal sense), and long five-inch claws on the fore-feet; also a violent and ungovernable temper when injured or provoked. The black bear is a smaller, scarcer, and comparatively harmless variety of the North American bear tribe, with smaller head and short claws. The original Californian grizzly, reported to have been a veritable monster in size, is now supposed to be extinct. Living in a more temperate climate than the range grizzly, he probably did not require to hibernate. I once asked a Californian acquaintance of mine if he had ever met a real old grizzly.

'I did once,' he replied, 'and that was once too often for me.' I pressed for further particulars. He went on: 'I was out deer-hunting in the Sierras.' Then, after a pause: 'Do you know the Palace Hotel at Frisco?' I did. 'Wal, sir, in one of them Sierra cañons I saw a bear about as big as that hotel a-comin' for me. I pumped a Winchester full of lead at him, and he still continued to come. I turned tail and ran,' he concluded, 'and I give you my word I've never seen that bear from that day to this!'

There are some huge bears still left in Alaska. An unlimited fish diet, when the salmon are running up

the rivers north of Puget Sound, probably contributes to this bear's growth.

Some old-timers have told me that the largest grizzlies were formerly found in Idaho and Montana. But these animals have now sadly decreased in numbers, and probably the two States above mentioned do not at present contain half a dozen specimens of the grizzly tribe. In the Yellowstone Park, bears, with other game, are now strictly preserved, and are beginning to be fairly numerous. An American friend, who recently spent a month camping out in the park, has informed me that one day he saw no less than fourteen bears therein, including the black and cinnamon varieties.

The ferocity of the range grizzly has no doubt been exaggerated. Like all animals under the sun, he possesses an instinctive fear of man. But if wounded, cornered, or disturbed at close quarters at a meal, he will occasionally, if full-grown, attack headlong anything or anybody. In attack he strikes, not hugs, and, as his strength is gigantic, close quarters with a grizzly means certain death. It was necessary, therefore, to kill an attacking grizzly before he came within arm's-length. In the days of the old muzzle-loading rifle—a weapon of inferior power to the modern breech-loader—the danger was naturally greater, as in the case of a charge all depended on the one shot. But the bear is a soft-skinned animal, and, no matter how large and ferocious, he cannot in open country, where one can see to shoot, live before a modern breech-loading rifle in the hands of a man who knows how to use it. The fatal accidents that have from time to time happened to Rocky Mountain bear-hunters have usually resulted from incautiously following wounded

grizzlies into thick cover, or coming on them suddenly in thick cover at close quarters. The best sport I ever had with bear was in a hunting expedition in 1878 to the Bighorn Mountains of Wyoming, described in a subsequent chapter. That country had then not been previously hunted, except by Indians and stray trappers and prospectors, and we there constantly found the bears in the open. I was fortunate enough on that trip to kill thirteen range grizzlies, old and young, by fair stalking, to my own rifle.

In the rough, thickly-wooded district of the Main Divide, in which we now found ourselves, bears were fairly plentiful, but difficult to come across, though we constantly found their tracks.

To return, then, to our first grizzly. We had killed a bull elk the first day we got into camp on Jack Creek, and proceeded promptly to set our bear-trap by the carcass. The bear-trap, by-the-by, was no trifle. It weighed close on 40 pounds, and took two men and a long lever—usually a young fir-tree, cut down for the purpose—to set. It was attached to a stout log by means of a short chain and ring, and then carefully concealed with earth and leaves close by the carcass or bait. I make no apologies for the use of a bear-trap, and my only regret is that I have never been present to watch a large grizzly five minutes after he had put his foot in the trap. It was, perhaps, rough on the grizzly. But man is a hunting, predatory animal at times, and, as Frank and Jack had already pointed out, one bear at least was absolutely required to round off our bag.

For two mornings running after the trap had been set we rode in procession from camp through the green forest to visit it. On the first occasion we

found that nothing had approached the carcass. On the second morning the trap was found sprung, and there also were the tracks of a large bear that had supped freely off the dead elk. The third day we again rode out, and as Jack, who was ahead, came in sight of the trap we saw him throw up his arm and give a view-halloo. There, seated calmly on the ground, one great paw firmly fixed in the trap's teeth, was a large old male grizzly waiting our arrival. It seemed a kind of murder to put a rifle bullet through his heart, but the deed was promptly done, and so our first grizzly died. I have assisted to trap many bears since, but this was the only one I can remember that had not broken away with the trap, and did not require to be hunted down. The log to which the trap was attached had in this case wedged firmly between two large rocks, and grizzly had expended his energies and broken his teeth in gnawing vainly at his iron prison.

After a country has been hunted for a year or two, bears become extremely difficult to find, frequenting thick fallen timber, and only coming out at night. On several subsequent hunting expeditions one or two large bear-traps formed part of our outfit. We used to set them by a dead elk or deer, in the manner already described, and then visit them periodically. The signs of a successful catch were unmistakable. The trap, as a rule, had disappeared along a trail easily followed, and marked by uprooted trees, torn-up ground, and sometimes the log to which the trap had been attached, torn into chips and toothpicks by the infuriated animal's teeth. A cautious advance along the trail was very necessary, as a full-grown grizzly in thick cover, with his temper completely

upset, was an awkward animal to come suddenly upon. Even a forty-pound trap on his foot makes surprisingly small difference to the activity of a full-grown specimen of this powerful animal. One of the largest bears I have ever shot was trapped in this way. On arriving at the bait we found a scene of desolation—young trees uprooted, the ground torn in all directions, the log of the trap in splinters, and the trap itself gone. We finally found the bear, after a long trail, in a furious temper at the bottom of a deep and thickly-wooded valley. Fortunately, he was below us, and there was plenty of time to shoot as he charged uphill.

We once caught a skunk in a bear-trap. Nature has endowed this beautiful, but most hateful and obnoxious, little animal with an awful weapon of defence, against which anything with olfactory nerves is helpless. I have seen a dog howl with agony after attacking a skunk. Fortunately, a skunk only emits its odour when assaulted. The animal knows its power well. It will walk into a ranch as if the place belonged to it, and the only thing to do is to leave it severely alone. Presently, after sampling the groceries, it may depart. If slain, the building straightway becomes uninhabitable, and, moreover, all the skunks for miles around will flock to the funeral. Whenever I caught a skunk away from my habitation, I promptly shot it and ran away, actuated only by motives of revenge. For I never forgot or forgave the skunk that compelled us to take its carcass from that bear-trap, and left us the lingering memory of its presence for the rest of that hunting-trip; for the bear-trap had to be taken in the waggon.

A week later we went fifty miles further south to Snake River, through a country then swarming with antelope, in order to make our first acquaintance with a tribe of Indians. The Ute tribe were then peaceable, and were located in a reservation near Snake River. A year or two after they became restless, and finally attacked some settlers, and had to be suppressed by force of arms.

I have always regarded the Red Indian tribes of the Rockies with some compassion. They, the rightful and hereditary owners of the North American continent, have been conquered and supplanted by the Anglo-Saxon race by right only of the stronger hand and of the higher intelligence. It is, we must presume, the inevitable and fore-ordained result of the survival of the fittest—of the operation of the Divine law that has decreed that man shall subdue and replenish the earth.

With all his fine natural qualities—for such qualities he certainly possesses, such as virility, courage, and some sense of honour and fidelity to his word—the Red Indian appears to have been incapable of initiating and developing any of the mechanical and industrial arts and sciences, and he has no faculty of administration. These, doubtless, are the capabilities that enable the dominant white races of the earth to carry out the Divine decree. The Red Indian of North America possessed only two ideas of life—fighting and hunting. He never cultivated the soil. The making of railroads, the building of factories, and the general development of industrial and commercial life, were not contained in his philosophy.

If Columbus had never discovered America, the indigenous Red Indian would still have been living in happy, uncivilized ignorance, hunting buffalo and elk

with bow and arrow, fighting with his fellow-tribesmen, and torturing his prisoners of war. And the pity of it is that he has been unable to assimilate the virtues or the knowledge of the white man. White civilization has been his bane. It is an indictable offence to sell liquor to an Indian, because in this respect he has no self-control. His only idea is to drink himself mad drunk. In his native buckskin, feathers and beads, he possesses a fine natural dignity all his own. In a white man's dress he looks supremely ridiculous. I have seen a Red Indian chief in a tall hat—with the crown thereof removed for the sake of coolness—through which his black hair protruded, and wearing with the greatest pride an old dress coat split up the back.

Many years ago the United States Government desired to impress the western tribes with the power, resources, and numbers of the white aggressors who were occupying the Indian soil. Accordingly, a selected number of the chiefs of the Utes, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes were taken east in an express train; were rattled through Chicago, Washington, and New York; were shown some of the wonders of modern civilization; were taken up the Hudson in a steamboat; were duly impressed with the numbers of the white men and with their knowledge and power; and then were sent back to their respective tribes to tell of what they had seen. The result was an absolute failure. The tribes refused to believe the tales that were told them, and thought the white men had thrown dust in the eyes of the chiefs, and made them see things that did not exist. 'There are only a few white men,' said the stay-at-home Indians, 'on a narrow strip of land east of the Mississippi River.

Let us go on fighting them, and in the end we shall kill them all, and the land will be ours.'

The imported black man and the invading yellow man—African negro and heathen Chinee—have come to America to stay. These men work under the white race, and so thrive, prosper, and increase. But no one ever heard of a Red Indian hotel-porter or railroad-car conductor, or cook, or washerman, or farmer. 'The only good Indian,' says the western trapper, 'is a dead Indian.' And in some sense—hard, matter-of-fact, cruel sense, no doubt—the saying is true. The continent owes its development to the white race, supplemented by the subservient labour of the black and the yellow. The native red man takes no serious hand in the business, and is being civilized off the face of his own land. He even catches the white man's diseases, and so dies wholesale. Whole tribes of red men have been decimated, and even exterminated, by small-pox and measles, caught from the whites. When taken ill, they thought themselves to be possessed by evil spirits, and so their medicine-men banged drums and howled over them to frighten the evil spirits away.

The Red Indian of British Columbia is to some extent an exception to the general process I have endeavoured to describe. In Victoria, for example, there are some prosperous Indian traders. Perhaps the congenial fur trade of the Far North-West enables them to thrive. On the whole, I am inclined to think that John Bull has treated his Indians better than Uncle Sam. When the pioneers of white civilization first crossed the Missouri River some startling tales were told, which go a long way to explain why the Red Indians formerly made it a point of honour to

torture and scalp all the white men they could catch. Here is an example. A certain white emigrant waggon-train was crossing the plains of Nebraska, and some of the fire-eaters of the party had boasted that they would kill the first Indian they met. Unfortunately, as it turned out, for them, the first Indians they saw were two squaws gathering berries in the brush. One of the squaws, disgraceful to relate, was shot by the white emigrants. But the other escaped to tell the tale to her tribe, then camped not far off. Next morning the tribe surrounded the emigrant camp in overpowering numbers, and demanded the surrender of the men who had done the deed. Two men were, perforce, given up to the Indians, who there and then tied them to the wheels of a waggon, and skinned them alive in the presence of their white companions.

But I am wandering somewhat from my sporting yarn. We camped one night on Snake River, where a family of half-breeds had a primitive ranch. Old Man Baker, as Jack Roberts called him, had married an Indian squaw, and had reared a dusky progeny. The girls of the family, Jack said, were as wild as antelope, and always ran into the brush on the appearance of strangers. However, we paid a friendly call, and interviewed Old Man Baker on the subject of sport. The girls of the household did not appear, but a young half-breed son was there, who, beyond displaying some interest in our rifles and general outfit, took no part in the conversation.

That afternoon my saddle, that had been deposited outside Baker's shanty, disappeared. My binoculars and mackintosh were fastened to it, and the loss would have been distinctly vexatious. That same

evening we were gathered in an adjoining wooden building that did duty as a saloon—the saloon and the blacksmith's shop are the main features and chief buildings of every primitive western settlement—discussing the saddle's disappearance, when a gunshot was heard behind the shanty. A few moments after Frank entered with the saddle in his arms. 'There's your darned saddle,' was all he said till we pressed him for an explanation.

'Wal,' said Frank, 'I guess that (qualified) young half-breed took your saddle all right. I had my eye on him from the start, and after dark I slipped out with one of your shot-guns, and lay low behind Old Man Baker's shebang.' Then, after a pause and a drink, he went on: 'Presently I seen young Baker slip out of the house and go into the long grass behind the corral. I followed, and seen him pick up the saddle from the brush. "Drop that saddle!" I hollered. He dropped the saddle right smart, and scooted for all he was worth, and I just picked it up and brought it along.'

Then we asked: 'But how about that gunshot we heard?'

'Wal,' drawled Frank, 'I reckon he stopped a charge of No. 6 shot all right, and mebbe he won't want to sit down on anything hard for a spell.'

After this episode we thought it wise to leave Snake River early next morning, and we subsequently heard that young Baker kept his bed for a week, vowing vengeance on the 'Frank Earnest crowd.' But there was no court of summary jurisdiction within 100 miles, and nothing more was heard of the incident.

The following night we pitched our camp near the

Ute Indian reservation and close to a good country for deer. I well remember meeting some Indians while hunting with Frank *en route*. Here was Fenimore Cooper's *noble* red man in the flesh. Alas for our ideals! I was completely disillusioned. The particular real article that I first saw was clothed in buckskin and moccasins certainly, but he was also small, somewhat mean-looking, and not too clean. He wanted whisky, which he did not get, and was keen on a horse trade.

We camped near the reservation for some days, and killed two or three good black-tail bucks. On one or two occasions an Indian accompanied us. Their eyesight is marvellous. I never knew an Indian fail to pick up deer before we did. But their shooting is indifferent. That, at least, was my experience of them. One day we met an Indian who had just killed three deer, regardless of age or sex. He had not even butchered them. This was a squaw's work. The Indian buck rode back to camp, and promptly despatched his squaw to find and bring in the meat that he had killed.

Every night after supper the Indians came stringing into our camp, and sat silently round our fire, emotionless, quiet, almost dignified. But they were not impressive. I was interested, but not attracted. One of these Indians, somewhat more intelligent and of better appearance than his fellows, helped us on one occasion to put out a fire in the grass round our camp, and we in return asked him to supper. He sat on a log and consumed alarming quantities of fried venison, tinned beans, hot rolls, and molasses, till he could eat no more. Probably he thought it polite to accept all that was offered, and we continued to ply

him in order to find out how much an Indian *could* eat at a sitting. He finally rolled off the log in a comatose state, and slept where he lay till morning.

These Indians always asked for whisky, which they did not get from us, also for molasses, or anything sweet, which we occasionally gave them. Their next idea was a horse-deal. Every Indian always had a pony to sell or to exchange. One day we witnessed a pony-race, at which most of the tribe were present. The ponies ran well, under severe chastisement by their riders, who rode bare-backed, with short, ungraceful, but firm seat.

Our final move of this hunting-trip was to Grand Encampment on the North Platte River, not far from the Colorado border. We parted company with our Indian friends on the best of terms, little thinking that a year or two later they would be out on the war-path.

Two days' journey took us back to Jack Creek, where I remember getting another fine old bull elk not far from our old camp ; and in another two days we had reached Grand Encampment, on the east side of the main range. We camped at the foot of a steep and rocky cañon that penetrated far into the wooded mountains, along the sides of which we hoped to get some big-horn sheep. Tom Bate was fortunate enough to get a fair-sized ram, but it so happened that I came across nothing but ewes, one of which I killed for venison.

It was now approaching November, and the weather became extremely cold. The thermometer was occasionally down to zero at night, and everything in the tent that could freeze was frozen solid by morning. Going to bed meant putting more clothes on, not

taking anything off. But in this western climate the cold is not felt severely, in the light and rarefied mountain atmosphere, unless it blows. When it did blow, it usually snowed as well, and then, as Frank remarked, all sensible white men 'knew enough to come inside' tent or shanty, as the case might be. We had a small stove in our tent, and until it went out at night we could keep warm enough.

But the time was now approaching when hunting had to stop, and a return to civilization became advisable. One morning in November we struck our hunting-camp for the last time that season, and started on a twenty-five mile ride to Saratoga Springs on the North Platte River, then a small collection of wooden huts close by the natural warm springs that have since helped to make Saratoga, Wyo., a thriving western town.

I shall never forget that ride. It was fine when we started, but came on to snow and blow for the last two hours of the journey. We arrived at Saratoga half frozen, starving, miserable, only too delighted to crowd into the shelter of a two-roomed shanty, where a cheery settler and his wife entertained us with their best. The wife, by-the-by, was a most beautiful young woman, obviously with a 'touch of the tar-brush' in her pedigree, but, as sometimes happens in such cases, possessing a perfect face and figure, a wealth of wavy dark hair, and 'velvet' eyes. It is one of the ironies of the situation that this lovely young creature should thus unexpectedly appear in an out-of-the-way log hut on the Main Divide, far away from the railroad and civilization, to do the honours to a weather-beaten hunting-party seeking shelter from a November blizzard.

Boney Earnest, Frank's brother, had joined our party a day or two before. He was in appearance a splendid specimen of frontier manhood, the ideal hero of western romance. He had just returned from an expedition made in company with Texas Jack, a well-known western scout, to the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming, and was full of Indian and hunting tales. It also appeared that he had quite a turn for cooking; and the amount of voluntary assistance rendered by him and some other members of our outfit to the beautiful octoroon in the kitchen was truly remarkable.

A few days after we found ourselves back at Fort Steele on the eve of our departure for New York and home. So ended one of the most enjoyable and profitable hunting-trips I have ever undertaken. From start to finish no contretemps had occurred to mar our enjoyment or to interfere with sport. We had obtained between us some thirty good wapiti heads, as well as samples of antelope, black-tail deer, and buffalo, also a range grizzly and a big-horn ram. Tom Bate had also further varied our bag by shooting a lynx. The ambition of the sportsman had been fully satisfied for the time being.

This is not the place fittingly to moralize on the ethics of big-game shooting. I have elsewhere written of the causes that have so sadly diminished the wild life of the Rockies, exterminated the buffalo, and thinned out the thousands of wapiti, deer, and antelope that formerly populated these then happy and fruitful hunting-grounds. Among these active causes the British sportsman is not included. We hardly ever killed the females of their kind, the cow elk or the doe deer, simply because we did not want

them, and to us, therefore, there was no pleasure in so doing. The real agents of destruction have been the hide-hunters of the 'eighties and 'nineties, largely assisted by the Indians, as well as by the settlers and ranchmen, who not so long since killed recklessly of the herds of wapiti and deer as they migrated in the late autumn out of the mountains to their winter range on the open deserts.

But all this is another story. In those days we took our sport as we found it, while the western settlers and hunters themselves never for a moment seemed to anticipate the day when game might disappear from the foot-hills, and when the wild natural life of the continent might suffer serious loss.

At Fort Steele we renewed our acquaintance with the American officers we had first met some months before. They listened to tales of our sport, and admired our trophies. But they had ideas of their own on the subject. 'Talk about elk,' said one of them, 'why, I killed eleven elk before breakfast the other day.' He had struck a band of elk in the rutting season in the open country, and had killed eleven cows and calves, probably wounding many more, by dint of pumping his Winchester rifle into the herd, regardless of age or sex. The curious part of it was that he seemed proud of the feat, upon which we did not venture to comment.

It also happened that before leaving we made the acquaintance of the now world-renowned Buffalo Bill, then also known as Captain (now Colonel) Cody, who chanced to be in the town. There was a slight rivalry at that time between him and Texas Jack, Boney Earnest's friend.

It was the eve of our departure for New York.

We were assembled in a Fort Steele saloon, where Boney had been regaling the assembled company with blood-curdling yarns of the hostile Indians, huge grizzlies, and unpassable cañons, that he and his party had recently met with in the heart of the mountain ranges on the Idaho border, a district then almost unknown. It was clearly implied from Boney's narrative that unparalleled difficulties and dangers had there been successfully negotiated by himself and his companions.

Buffalo Bill, to whom we had been formally introduced that afternoon, was present, and for a time played the part of a silent and interested listener. Later in the evening, after some further friendly intercourse and refreshment, Buffalo Bill unburdened his soul on the subject of Boney's tales. 'Of the three biggest liars in America,' he casually remarked, 'Texas Jack is one, and Boney, here, is the other two!'

It was thereupon unanimously agreed that Boney should set up the parting drinks.

CHAPTER IX

AFTER BIG-GAME IN WYOMING

'Say, are you satisfied with your trip?' asked Jack Roberts, the hunter.

'We've done well enough with elk, deer, and antelope—that's certain,' answered I; 'but I want to see and kill some good big-horn rams and a grizzly or two another year. Where can we go to get them?'

'You killed a sheep in Rattlesnake Cañon last week, and trapped a grizzly on the Main Divide. What is the matter with them, any way?'

'They were all we saw of the kind, Jack. Besides, the ram was a small one; you know that well enough. As for the bear, he broke all his teeth in the trap, and showed no fight when we found him. I want to kill a grizzly in a fair stalk.'

'Wal,' drawled Jack, 'if you've lost any b'ar, I guess I can show you where to find 'em all right enough.'

'Where's that?'

'In the Bighorn Mountains, 'way up north. I was trappin' there two years ago, and saw all the b'ar I had any use for, and we weren't hunting them, either. You'll have to take some chances with the Indians, mebbe.'

'I thought the Indian troubles were over ?' said I.

'They're quiet enough just now,' returned Jack; 'but I wouldn't trust the varmint a yard. That Cheyenne tribe has been restless for some time past. But we won't borrow trouble, any way. If you want a trip to the Bighorn next summer, I'll take you all right, and chance it.'

The above conversation took place between one of our hunters, Jack Roberts, and myself, in the autumn of 1877, after our return from my first hunting-trip in the Rockies, the incidents of which I have already described. The result of the conversation was that August of the following year saw my friend E. M. Miller and myself landed from the Union Pacific west-bound train at the same little western town—Fort Steele, on the North Platte River — intent on a hunting-trip to the Bighorn Mountains of Wyoming. This district in the early 'seventies was practically a *terra incognita* to all but a few adventurous trappers and prospectors, and to certain Indian tribes, who under their chief, Sitting Bull, were at that time still inclined, naturally enough, to look upon North-Western Wyoming as their rightful hunting-grounds, and to resent the intrusion of the white man. We were the first amateur white hunting-party that had ever entered this particular region.

A great change has come over the scene since those days, some five-and-twenty years ago, of which I write. Then, for some 300 miles or more north of the Union Pacific Railroad, the territory of Wyoming (now a State), from the North Platte River to the Montana boundary, was a wild western country, uncivilized, to all intents and purposes uninhabited

by white men, a paradise for game. Miles of upland prairie and rolling foot-hills, covered with grass and sage-brush, are interspersed here and there with deep and precipitous cañons, and with rugged pine-clad mountain ranges running up to 10,000 feet or more in height. Here, in a country magnificently grassed and watered, and with open deserts for winter range, were at that time to be found thousands of elk (wapiti), buffalo, black-tail deer, and antelope, as well as the range grizzly, the big-horn sheep, or *Ovis montana*, and an occasional puma or mountain lion. For smaller game, wild duck and geese were plentiful in the numerous lakes and rivers, while sage-hens, grouse, hares, and rabbits (jack and cotton-tail), abounded on the prairies and wooded foot-hills. This was part of the fair domain, then teeming with wild animal life, that the ruthless civilization of the white man has—let us not cant about it—wrested by brute force from the red man, its original and rightful owner—on the principle, let us take it, of the survival of the strongest and the fittest.

By the establishment of the Yellowstone National Park and game sanctuary in the north-west corner of Wyoming, Uncle Sam, with sound foresight and good common-sense, has prevented the total extinction of wapiti, deer, bear, antelope, and sheep, in this district of the Rockies. But he has been too late to save the buffalo, whose size and habits have now long since rendered him an easy prey to hide-hunters armed with breech-loading rifles.

On arrival at Fort Steele we spent a day or two in purchasing stores and generally arranging the details of our outfit, a process requiring some amount of forethought. Once started away from the railroad

and civilization, anything forgotten must be done without. There is no convenient store round the corner from camp where the missing article can be obtained. I have seldom, if ever, started on a hunting expedition without forgetting something or other—usually a civilized necessity of some kind. On one occasion, for example, it was tea. Fortunately, on that particular occasion the omission was discovered and made good at a convenient ranch not far from the starting-point. The prime necessities of camp life—namely, salt, matches, ammunition, and blankets—were never allowed by our guides to be forgotten. All else besides these, in the eyes of an old-timer, were regarded as luxuries—agreeable, no doubt, but not indispensable—excepting, perhaps, an axe and cooking-pot, and, it might be, a bottle of whisky. This latter article we took in limited quantity, did not husband it, and when it was finished, happily went without.

On the eve of our departure from Fort Steele our party were gathered in the main saloon of the town, when Jack perceived through the window a well-known and dissipated local character approaching, apparently bent on a drink. Someone had recently brought a small and rather rare kind of water-snake a few inches long up from the river in an old tin can. 'See, boys,' said Jack, 'here comes old Timberline Jones. We'll have a game with him;' and he rapidly inserted the water-snake into the glass water-bottle on the counter. To the assembled party there enters an instant after our dissipated friend Jones, obviously recovering from the effects of a recent debauch. Would he join the boys in a drink? He didn't mind if he did, and promptly poured out a whisky straight.

As he raised the glass to his mouth, his eye caught sight of the water-bottle on the bar counter, with the water-snake squirming inside. Solemnly lowering his untasted glass, he gazed steadfastly at the jug. After a pause: 'Boys, d' yer see anything in that jug?' Not a muscle in the watching faces stirred. Presently a matter-of-fact voice replied: 'What's up, Timberline? The water's all right, any way, I guess.' 'But don't yer see the snake?' persisted Jones. 'What snake?' replied the chorus. 'You're shaky this morning, pard. That's only good spring water.' Slowly replacing on the counter his untasted drink, and muttering to himself, 'Great Cæsar! I've got 'em again!' Timberline Jones at once left the saloon, evidently under the intended and sobering impression that the snake was a phantom of his imagination.

Next day our party started north from Fort Steele for our happy hunting-grounds. The first stage was to a small outlying ranch on the North Platte River, about sixty miles away. A four-horse waggon carried our stores, baggage, and tents, convoyed by our party on horseback—my friend and myself, two guides, a cook, and a 'horse wrangler' with the spare horses intended to be used as pack-animals. Some ten miles from the start our waggon upset on a steep hillside and turned completely over. Luckily, no damage was done beyond a broken pole and one bottle of pickles smashed, the soft bedding on the top saving the cargo.

The second day out we reached our ranch, the last roof we were destined to see for some three months; and here two or three days were spent in selecting pack-horses, fitting pack-saddles, and arranging the packs. A considerable amount of care and fore-

thought, coupled with the knowledge only gained by experience, is required for a well-ordered pack-train. Badly-fitting saddles and ill-balanced packs mean sore backs, kicking ponies, general delay, bad language, and loss of temper. In our case, nine hardy little western ponies carried stores and cooking outfit, baggage, spare ammunition, camp tools, and two A tents; and it took Miller and myself about a month to learn the mysteries of a diamond hitch, in which the ropes form a diamond on the top of the pack.

Although our men were experts, it always took two hours to pack nine horses when camp was moved. The first day out with our train, and within a mile of the start, our nine animals were scattered in every direction, bucking stores and impedimenta all over the prairie with a frolicsome lightheartedness that contrasted strangely with the sober appearance of the same train a month later, as, taught by experience, they sedately 'followed my leader,' nose to tail, over hill and dale wherever required. Once thoroughly broken in to the business, a pack-train is, undoubtedly, the ideal method of travelling through a rough game country. Almost any country, however thickly wooded or steeply mountainous, can thus be traversed and the best camping-grounds chosen. On one occasion our whole train was lost for a day in the heart of the range, during a thick fog, whilst moving camp. As the party were all together at the time no harm happened. We camped by a convenient stream and waited till the weather cleared.

For the first week of our trip we travelled steadily northwards at the rate of fifteen to twenty miles a day, crossing the Rattlesnake Range and a forty-

mile desert beyond, and one fine evening pitched our camp at the foot of some hills that our guides informed us were the southern spur of the Bighorn Range. Antelope had been everywhere visible since we had left the ranch, and had supplied us daily with fresh meat and the best possible rifle practice. On the Rattlesnake Mountains we had seen our first band of elk, some thousand strong, and had left them severely alone. They would keep, if necessary, until our return. On the edge of the desert we found our first buffalo. Almost every day we amused ourselves by running one or two old bulls, but were content to kill only a couple of the oldest and shaggiest we could find, in order to preserve their heads as trophies.

This characteristic wild animal of North America, which once roamed the western prairies in millions, and was the mainstay of the Indian tribes for food, robes, and tent-covering, is now, as everyone knows, practically extinct. A few still exist in the National Park, and also here and there in captivity. Every naturalist and sportsman must deeply regret this destruction, and yet it is difficult to imagine how, in a wild and originally somewhat lawless country, it could have been prevented. To a man mounted on a good horse and armed with a breech-loading rifle, this shaggy-fronted, ferocious-looking old impostor was the easiest possible prey; and his dark body and great size always gave him away to the sharp-eyed hunter in the open ground which he always insisted on frequenting. I have constantly run solitary old bulls on a gray fourteen-hand pony that was my favourite hunting mount, and only once failed in any serious attempt to overhaul the buffalo. Dear old Pinto! what a free and gallant steed he was! He even at times bolted with

me, on scenting buffalo or elk, being as keen as his rider to get near the game.

What usually happened on these occasions was that, after a good gallop of one or two miles, I would get within 20 yards or so of the buffalo, generally on an uphill grade ; and the then indignant bull would raise his ridiculous little tufted apology for a tail, turn round, and, if approached too close, endeavour a charge—an attack which never succeeded while the horse kept his legs, which mine, I am glad to say, always did. After a good look at, and some amusement with, our buffalo, we usually left him unmolested. There was always, to my mind, something humorous, and also slightly pathetic, in the contrast between an old bull buffalo's ferocious, shaggy-fronted appearance and the impotence of his attack upon a man on horseback. I once succeeded—this was on another hunting-trip—in company with a western hunter, in driving a bull buffalo some miles towards camp. He had been slightly wounded by one of our party, and by riding a little way behind and on either flank we moved him at a trot for several miles in the desired direction, in order—as my companion remarked—to please the boys in camp. But the bull finally tired of the process, and turned to bay in a steep gully, out of which nothing would dislodge him. From the top of the steep bank above him I might have sprung on his back, and could touch him with the muzzle of my rifle. Having duly admired his massive proportions and noted the savage way he drove his horns into the bank, we left him in peace, and I have no doubt he eventually recovered both his health and his temper.

The one occasion on which I failed to catch

a buffalo, and ran Pinto to a complete standstill in the attempt, was when we were crossing the desert already mentioned. We were travelling with our pack-train, when out of a gully, about 200 yards ahead of us, emerged a solitary old buffalo bull, one of the largest I have ever seen. My horse was fresh, and I promptly gave chase. I wanted to kill that particular bull. By the time I was over the gully the shaggy old monster, having stood for a moment to gaze at the strange intruders, went off at a lumbering gallop, and with a good start, over a long downhill stretch of prairie. A single buffalo can run downhill or on the flat at a pace that will stretch the best cow-pony that ever lived, but uphill his heavy fore-hand soon brings him to bay. It so happened in this case that the prairie stretched downhill for many miles, and I never got within 100 yards of that bull. I may mention that I never fired a stern shot at a buffalo ; this would have been useless cruelty. For a clean kill it was necessary to have a fair broadside chance and shoot him low behind the shoulder. Some three miles farther on, Pinto, with legs astraddle, heaving flanks, and loosened girth, was standing absolutely pumped out—the pace had been severe—while his rider sat on the prairie and watched with some annoyance a dark speck disappearing over the horizon in a cloud of dust.

A herd of buffalo were much more easily overhauled. They probably hampered one another's movements when at the gallop ; at all events, I never found any difficulty under ordinary circumstances, and when mounted on a good horse, in riding up alongside of a herd. On one occasion our men roped a buffalo calf, which we ear-marked and turned loose again.

It was while crossing the forty-mile desert I have mentioned, south of the Bighorn Mountains, that we tried our first buffalo steak. We had heard and read of the gastronomic delights of buffalo hump, but the reality was a dismal failure. The only game in the desert were buffalo and a few antelope. Having run out of fresh venison, it so happened that, wanting an antelope very badly, we failed to get one, and were fain to kill an old buffalo for the larder. His tenderloin—cruelly sarcastic word—was duly boiled first, and then hashed and fried afterwards. A single plateful more than sufficed to satisfy six hungry men, not over fastidious after some weeks of camp-life. The same culinary operations performed on an old boot would have produced an equally enticing dish.

We were now approaching the home of the grizzly and the big-horn sheep. Next day we travelled on and upwards along the spur and well into the heart of a rough and thickly-wooded country, and pitched our first regular camp in a beautiful grove of firs by the side of a mountain stream.

During that day's travel we came across the only man, outside of our own party, that we were destined to see for some two months. Jack and I had ridden ahead to look for a black-tail buck—an animal which supplies the most delicious venison of the Rockies. Coming suddenly to the edge of a small gully, there below us was a prospector's camp, whose owner was washing some gravel by a stream. We rode close to him unobserved, and his startled look as he turned and saw two men, armed with rifles, close behind him I shall not easily forget. His mind was soon relieved, but he subsequently confessed his fear of Indians, and that for a moment his scalp felt loose.

Yes, he guessed he was alone and washing for colour. His pard had gone into the nearest settlement for stores. In answer to inquiries about game, he calculated he hadn't lost any bear himself, but that we should find all the grizzlies we had any use for further up the range. Had we a chaw of 'baccy? We had, and gave it, and so passed on.

Soon after, riding through an open park, we jumped a fine black-tail buck with a clustered head of many points. Before I was out of the saddle the deer was going, with the bounding gallop peculiar to these animals, for all he was worth to the cover beyond. I broke his neck, just as he was entering the timber, with one of those lucky shots that occasionally come off when wanted, and a splendid pair of fat haunches subsequently hung in camp that night. It was our pride all through the rest of that hunting-trip never to be without fat black-tail venison in the larder.

Next day was our first regular hunt. For the first time, too, we pitched our A tents. Hitherto, having been travelling steadily every day, we had been satisfied, in glorious August weather, to make our beds on the prairie under the stars.

Our camp was pitched at the head of a long valley edged with rocky cliffs and timber. Spying with a glass while breakfast was in preparation, we had seen about a mile away some animals that looked like bighorns. My friend and I tossed up, and the chance fell to me to go after them. As luck would have it, however, the ram that day fell to Miller, and not to myself, while I managed to secure a couple of bears.

About 9 a.m. we started in different directions, Jack and I down the lip of the valley before-men-

Some of the Pack-horses.

8,000 feet above the Sea.

Packing Venison.

tioned, the others towards the west. Every now and then we dismounted and carefully examined the valley below us from the rocky ridge above. About the third time of doing this, as I stood on a slab of rock at the very edge of the cliff, a terrific scuffling took place on the rough hillside below me, and the next moment a three-parts-grown bear sprang on to the ledge not 20 feet from where I stood, and made for the thick timber beside us. I lost no time in breaking his back, as it chanced, with a rifle bullet. He fell, and scrambled towards me, evidently with hostile intent. My second barrel at close quarters laid him dead at our feet, just as Jack shouted, 'Give him another !' I subsequently observed to Jack that the advice was quite unnecessary ; the quarters were closer than I liked. But all ended well—for us ; and we subsequently packed a fine silver-tip fur hide behind the cantle of Jack's saddle.

From that day onwards our saddles and the camp outfit generally reeked of the smell of bear, much to the annoyance and disgust of some of our equine companions. The nervous systems of one or two of our horses were completely upset by this pervading odour of a successful bear-hunting camp. They never got quite reconciled to it, as a scattered pack and occasionally a dismounted rider would every now and then testify. We continued our progress down the valley, thinking that, if we could not find sheep, jumping grizzlies from under the cliff was sport enough in itself. Later in the day we were engaged in eating the wild raspberries that grew in profusion along the hillside. I had left Jack and the horses a little way behind, and, rifle in hand, had gradually eaten my way along a ridge of raspberry-bush-covered rock

overhanging a thickly-wooded glade, when I again heard the rush of some heavy animal below me. I cocked the rifle and peered down through the bushes and trees. Through an opening I presently saw a black bear some 60 yards below, who, unfortunately for himself, undertook to stop for a moment and look up towards the noise that had disturbed him. The chance was a pretty one. I fired straight down at the centre of a black furry back, heard a scuffle and a moan as the bear passed out of sight, and all was still. We cautiously made our way down to the cover below, and equally cautiously crawled through the bushes towards where the bear was last seen, and found him stone-dead.

He happened to be the only black bear we shot during the trip. This variety is distinguished from the ordinary range grizzly by a smaller head and claws, a smaller body generally, a milder disposition, and silky coal-black fur. The cubs of the black bear are occasionally brown, but they invariably, as I believe, turn black in colour with maturity.

The ordinary range grizzly, including the cinnamon and silver-tip, possesses the true grizzly characteristics of a large wide head, long five-inch claws on the fore-feet, great muscular strength, and an exceedingly savage disposition when full maturity is reached.

We returned well satisfied to camp that night, with two bear skins and skulls, to find an old ram's head adorning a conspicuous position by our camp-fire, killed by my friend in a cañon west of the Divide. He reported having seen a band of old rams, and that he had wounded and lost another. The head he brought back measured 38 inches along the curve, and 16 inches in circumference at the base, and was

a good sample of the kind of trophy we had come some 5,000 miles from home to obtain.

We spent a cheery evening in camp that night, telling yarns round a blazing fire and looking forward to the next few weeks' sport with a keenness that had only been whetted by the day's success.

For the next week we hunted from the same camp with varying success, each going daily in different directions with our respective guides, devoting our attention solely to bear and old ram sheep, and returning at night to swap yarns and compare notes round the camp-fire. The country was full of game, and had we desired merely to make a record bag, a holocaust of slaughter might have been perpetrated. Deer, buffalo, elk, and antelope were constantly in view, of which occasional specimens were only killed when a change of venison was desired; otherwise these animals were left severely alone.

Bears, however, we continued to shoot whenever we got the chance. On one occasion only do I remember not going after a bear. It happened thus: Bob Snell and I were out for the day, and fortune favoured us from the start. Within a mile or so from camp we spied a large she-bear with two well-grown cubs in an open park. A cautious approach on foot up a steep gully brought us within easy range, and in a few moments I had killed all three in a similar number of shots with my ·500 express.

The important thing in bear-shooting is to make sure of the first shot. It should be placed without fail in a vital spot. The bear is thus mortally wounded before knowing the whereabouts of the hunter. If, on the other hand, the bear is not hit in the right place or the cub is first killed, the hunter

may have a fight on his hands with an aggressive mother, infuriated, but not incapacitated, by a slight wound, or enraged by the unprovoked assault upon her offspring.

It took us some time to skin the three bears and to pack the hides on our somewhat unwilling steeds. Early that same afternoon we sighted another bear—also on an open hillside—busily engaged in digging for roots. He was a three-year-old silver-tip, with a beautiful light-coloured skin, and afforded me a most interesting stalk. In his case there was no convenient gully up which to approach him. But I managed to get to within 200 yards, under cover of some trees. Then came the difficulty of the stalk. I was unwilling to shoot at this distance, as the bear was constantly in motion. It was a hot day; the flies were troublesome, and in the intervals of digging Bruin afforded us much amusement by his antics, snapping at the flies, scratching his ear with his hind-paw, and sometimes jumping round like a terrier puppy after its tail.

I wanted the skin badly, and determined to try for a nearer shot. Bob was accordingly left under cover with the horses, while I attempted an approach in the open. The stretch of hillside between the bear and my rifle was covered with a splendid crop of mountain-grass nearly 2 feet high. Gradually I worked my way forward in a sitting position, remaining motionless when the bear looked up, and only moving when he resumed digging and feeding.

By this means I managed to approach within 100 yards, and then the rifle was brought into play. The difficulty now was to get a steady shot. A more restless brute I have seldom seen. Half a dozen

times or more I was on the point of shooting, when some antic on his part would spoil the opportunity for a fair shoulder-shot. At length the trigger was pressed. At the same instant he moved again, fortunately towards the bullet, which luckily broke his neck instead of piercing the heart, as intended. He fell stone-dead in his tracks.

By the time we had taken the skin the day was getting on. We made for camp, some miles distant, and on the way there spied yet another bear, this time a female with three cubs, feeding nearly a mile away, and in the wrong direction for home.

The result of a council of war with Bob was that we left them severely alone and proceeded on to camp. I can confidently state that this was the only occasion, in my recollection, when I have turned away from a possible bear-hunt. The argument that prevailed was this: Before we could approach, kill, and skin the four bears it would be dark. This would probably mean, in the rough country we were in, a night in the open, while to kill four bears and not take their skins was out of the question. Therefore I take credit for the fact that we returned content with the four skins already obtained, and sternly turned our backs on the live bears then in sight.

One day I was fortunate enough to secure four old ram sheep of the largest size, and during the process of stalking and shooting them ran against almost every variety of Rocky Mountain fauna. I was out with our chief guide, Jack, and early in the day we had spied with our glasses a band of rams on a rocky hill about a mile distant. Riding through some scattered timber towards the foot of this hill, we disturbed in

succession a buck antelope, two old buffalo bulls, and one of the finest old black-tail bucks I have ever seen. This latter animal simply would not get out of our way—because, I suppose, we did not want him; and he even threatened at one time to spoil our stalk of the sheep. We eventually managed, after a long climb on foot, to get within shot of four old rams, killing one and wounding another that we afterwards secured. Meantime, during this pursuit, we came on the rest of the band, who saw us and ran. They paused for a moment on the crest of the hill, and I knocked over a third ram—a long shot—before they disappeared, and wounded a fourth. We ran on to the ridge of the hill, but the wounded ram had disappeared. Following downhill the general direction the herd had taken, I then jumped a grizzly out of a gulch, and missed him handsomely as he galloped away. A very exhausted and broken-winded biped struggled back up the hill again—the elevation was probably over 9,000 feet—and, as luck would have it, I came unexpectedly on my last wounded ram lying down among some rocks. He sprang up as I sighted him, and ran down the hill past me, within easy range. With a desperate effort I managed to hold the sight on to him long enough to break his back, and then sat down on the hillside, fairly exhausted. Jack presently appeared leading the horses.

'Look at the elk!' was his first remark; and there at the foot of the hill I saw a large band of these beautiful deer, evidently disturbed, but not much alarmed, by the shots, slowly filing out of the timber into an open park a mile away. The 'whistling' season had just commenced, and two fine old bulls, who were evidently unwilling that the herd should travel far,

having rounded up the cows, proceeded to decide the right of their possession by the time-honoured test of a fight. A prettier sight I have seldom seen. I watched the combat through the glass until one of the bulls turned and fled, leaving the victor sole possessor of a large harem.

Having somewhat recovered from our exertions, and Jack being of opinion that we had had a 'strong-adjective' of a time with the sheep, our thoughts naturally turned to lunch. We rode slowly down and round the hill towards a convenient stream at its foot, with the heads of the three rams already killed. But our morning's sport was not yet over. A solitary ram was shortly spied on the reverse slope—evidently a good one, with a fine head. Again leaving my companion with the horses, I approached through the rocks and cover to within 150 yards, and for the fourth and last time that day managed a clean kill; though at the shot the ram moved round the hill out of sight, and I thought at first I had missed him. Finding and following a strong blood-trail, we found him a few hundred yards distant, stone-dead, shot just over the heart. We returned slowly to camp that afternoon, with a pair of big-horn heads slung behind each saddle.

For some weeks after this we proceeded to work slowly north and west through the range, camping here and there for a few days at a time, adding steadily to our pile of furry bearskins and curved *Ovis montana* heads meanwhile, and at the same time steadily reducing our stock of groceries. Our pack-horses were now in good working trim, and gave us no trouble, with the exception of one old piebald Indian pony that, in spite of much correction, never

failed to rub his pack against a tree, or, if possible, to buck it off whenever a fair opportunity presented itself. One day, in one of these recurrent fits of temper, he succeeded in planting a hind-foot in the centre of a bag of flour and scattering its contents down the mountain-side. This incident put us thereafter on siege rations of bread, and made us think of the day when a return to the ranch would be necessary.

On off-days our milder relaxation was trout-fishing. The streams on the west side of the Divide all held good trout, running up to 3 pounds in weight, voracious and simple-minded to a degree. I once stood below a glassy pool in a mountain stream on the Main Divide, and for a quarter of an hour hooked a trout, and sometimes two, at every throw. The tackle was strong and the flies large. I had sixteen speckled beauties on the grass, when the rise apparently ceased. I climbed the bank over the pool, and could see every stone in the bottom. Not a trout was left. I had caught every fish the pool contained. The streams in the Bighorn Mountains were usually dammed by beaver and lined with thick brush, in which bear-sign was plentiful. A rifle was often part of the fisherman's kit. On one occasion, going through the brush to a beaver-pool, the rush of a heavy animal through the thick cover, and an ominous 'woof-woof,' betokened the presence of a grizzly, and sent my heart into my mouth. The thickness of the brush gave the rifle no fair chance. In this case, fortunately, grizzly had an engagement elsewhere. I am glad to say I never jumped a fighting grizzly in thick cover. The little difficulty I subsequently relate occurred in comparatively open ground.

These beaver-pools always held the best trout, but the fish occasionally preferred a meat diet. Bob Snell, the long-haired, buckskin-clad old trapper who was one of our party, looked with scorn on my ten-foot Farlow rod, gut cast, and loch-trout flies. A willow-pole, string, and eel-hook were good enough for him, with a chunk of bear-meat in his pocket, whence he cut his baits. On our first fishing picnic we had a friendly contest. I was simply not in it. Half the water was unfishable with fly, owing to the thick brush surrounding it. I was hung up at every other cast. But the old trapper was in his element. His bait was slung with a splash into a beaver-pool, the smartest trout would promptly seize it, and the next moment find himself jerked violently on to the bank, or perhaps into the top of some tall pine-tree. The trapper caught as many pounds as I did ounces. After this, except in open water, the Farlow tackle was discarded for the fishing-pole and bait. Where the water was open, the fly more than held its own.

Among other incidents of our trip, I once was unwillingly compelled to spend a night out on the mountain-side. It happened thus: Bob Snell, our second guide, and the writer were hunting on the west side of the range, in a country intersected by the deep and steep-sided cañons characteristic of the Rockies. We had spied two good rams feeding on the far side of one of these cañons, which we had spent the whole morning in crossing. The far side was flat, and offered no convenient cover for a stalk, except high grass. I managed, nevertheless, to effect an artistic stalk.

By the time we reached the flat on the far side of the cañon the rams had lain down, and I could just

see their great curving horns over the grass. I slowly approached up wind in a sitting posture, with my head just clear of the grass. When some 200 yards away the rams caught sight of me and sprang up, standing for a moment to look, broadside on. Taking a full sight on the back of the largest, I was lucky enough to break his spine, but missed the second ram as he ran—like a streak—for the cañon. By the time we had returned with the head across the cañon back to our horses it was getting late. Idly spying up the gorge with my glass before setting out for camp, there we saw a large bear coming down a game-trail on the other side. The opportunity was too good to be lost. Again we scrambled down the cañon-side, caught the bear feeding on wild-cherries at the bottom, put a bullet down her throat as she gazed upwards at the intruders looking at her—it was a large female grizzly—over a rock, and finally, after skinning her, regained our horses just as it was getting dark. We being then in a hurry, my horse, of course, shied at the bearskin—broke away and bolted—had to be followed and caught, and I shortly after realized the reason of Bob's accompanying profanity. A mountain mist descended upon us, and before we were a mile on our road home it was pitch dark and raining heavily. Presently I could not see my horse's head. We camped perforce that night in the open, supperless and smokeless—everything on us being soaking wet—with saddles for pillows, and covered by the fresh bearskin. While groping in the dark for a tree to tie my horse to, I had successfully managed, in order to make my wetting thorough and complete, to fall into a water-hole.

At the first streak of dawn we started for camp,

and got back in time for breakfast, none the worse for our outing. But all that night I had, for the first time, envied Bob's capacity for chewing tobacco.

We had now killed about a dozen grizzlies without any serious difficulty. 'Where are your fighting grizzlies?' we one evening asked our guides, with all the insolence and confidence of youth. 'We thought these Bighorn grizzlies of yours could fight.'

'This yer shootin' picnic ain't over yet,' growled the men in return. 'There's some old grizzlies about this range that won't take much to rile, and don't you forget it. You may happen on one yet before you're through, and then you'll find out all right what a b'ar-fight means.'

The opportunity came sooner than I thought. So far no very old bears had been killed, with the exception of one monster shot by my friend Miller as he lay asleep under a rock. Next day Miller and two of the boys went off on a fishing picnic to a trout-stream not far from camp. Jack and I had spent the morning cleaning bear-hides, and after lunch we rode off north into some rough country where I had previously seen much bear-sign, and presently came to the top of a hill commanding a distant view. Jack used the binoculars while I smoked a contemplative pipe and admired the scenery. 'I see a bear,' at length remarked my companion. 'I thought at first it was a piece of sage-brush, till the darned thing began to move.' We promptly hustled off in pursuit, and after a ride of a mile or more came to an open park, in the centre of which lay a fallen tree. The bear we had seen in the distance had been feeding on a plateau beyond.

I chanced to be riding ahead. 'There's a bear!'

whispered Jack as a big gray head appeared over the fallen tree. What followed in the next few moments takes longer to tell than it did to happen. As I sprang from the saddle to shoot, an enormous grizzly of the largest kind jumped up on the trunk of the tree, behind which he had been feeding on a dead elk. As I pulled the first trigger, he sprang down, all claws, hair and teeth, and charged straight at us. The shot was a clean miss over his back as he jumped down ; and here was grizzly not 30 yards away, on a downhill run, and obviously intent on first blood. The second bullet went home, right in the centre of the broad, furry breast, as we afterwards ascertained. He turned a complete somersault, and, lighting on his feet again, came on, apparently uninjured. My rifle was now empty, and there was no time to reload. The next few seconds were a kind of nightmare. I turned and jumped at the saddle; my horse, seeing the bear close behind me, swerved and bolted. Grizzly, now only a few yards away, was rising to strike with a gigantic clawy, sinewy paw that could with a single blow break a buffalo's back or tear out all his ribs. With a cold thrill down my back, and a sensation at the pit of the stomach that reminded me of the fourth-form room at Harrow, I also swerved and bolted—up the hill—for all I was ever worth, in what Jack afterwards described as ten-foot strides. He, meanwhile, with unloaded rifle thrown on the ground, sat on his horse 50 yards away and emptied his six-shooter at the bear without apparent effect.

I glanced nervously over my shoulder as I ran, and then saw that the fight was done. Grizzly—obviously mortally wounded—having missed his blow, was blundering on downhill, probably not knowing where

he went. Even an old king of the Divide, weighing near 1,000 pounds of sinewy muscular flesh and bone, could not long withstand the effects of a half-inch expanding bullet, propelled by 5 drachms of black powder through a Henry rifled barrel, crashing through his vitals.

I pulled up short, rapidly reloaded, put two more bullets behind the shoulder of the bear, and laid him dead at our feet.

An inspection of the premises showed the half-eaten carcass of an elk behind the fallen tree in the centre of the open park. We had disturbed an old grizzly at his dinner, and thus upset his temper. Hence the sudden and savage nature of his charge. We pulled ourselves together; took the skin and skull of our fallen foe; went on after the bear first seen, but failed to find him; returned to find and kill yet *another* bear eating the same elk—this one bolted ingloriously for the timber, and was shot in the process —and so home to camp. The laugh round the camp-fire that night was on the side of our men.

Where a country has been at all disturbed by hunters, grizzlies are hardly ever seen in the open. They lie up in the thickest forests during the day, and only travel and feed at night. The bear-hunter is then usually compelled to resort to bear-traps, baited in the manner already described with the carcass of a freshly-killed elk or deer. Such were the base uses to which the lordly elk was occasionally put, in order to satisfy the exigencies of wild western sport. But the tables were occasionally turned on the hunter. There is a ghastly story told of a solitary trapper who was found dead in the great forty-pound trap he had been setting for a bear. Both his arms were im-

prisoned in the teeth of the trap, and he had slowly starved to death. It was surmised that he had inadvertently sprung the trap while occupied in concealing it with earth and leaves.

Soon after, we began to think of returning southwards. It was towards the end of September, and the weather began to threaten. A three days' snowstorm had kept us in camp, where we spent the first day in building a 'wicky-up,' or Indian hut, with young fir trees and boughs, and the next two days in playing poker therein with our men, who entirely convinced us—fortunately, the stakes were low—that poker is a game of skill. On the fourth day the weather cleared, and that evening some of our party brought back the news that they had heard much rifle-shooting on the east side of the range.

We noticed that our guides that night were distinctly uneasy, and something was said about Indians. Next day Jack and I went out to reconnoitre in the direction where the shots had been heard. We found the carcass of a freshly-killed buffalo, also numerous horse-tracks crossing the range from east to west. These Jack pronounced to be those of a party of Indians on the war-path: first, because no party of white men would be travelling in such numbers; second, because the horses were unshod—for these reasons they were Indians; and, thirdly, having no lodge-poles with them—these drag on the ground and leave a trail—they must perforce be Indians on the war-path.

On our return to the railroad some weeks later we found Jack's deductions were correct. A band of red men on the war-path had crossed the range a few miles from our camp—fortunately, the recent snow

FALL RIVER BASIN.

CAMP ON TEE-PEE CREEK.

FALL RIVER.

had concealed our trail and our presence—and had subsequently proceeded to raid a valley farther west. The rifle-shots Miller had heard the previous day were no doubt the Indians killing some buffalo for meat.

Our guides declined to do any more hunting, and insisted on an immediate return. Next day we left our camp with regret, and proceeded to go south in what we, who had no experience of Indians, thought to be an undignified hurry. We subsequently altered our opinion, and the local view was that we narrowly escaped, mainly through the luck of the snowstorm, an Indian fight.

But there was yet another bear episode in store. I had ridden ahead of the pack-train, and was engaged in eating my lunch as I jogged along, when, on rounding a corner, there on an open hillside, not 200 yards away, was a fair-sized silver-tip digging for roots. The temptation for a shot was irresistible. I jumped from the saddle, and with the bridle over my arm opened fire on the bear. My horse had recently become rather jumpy under fire, and would not stand well. The continuous and all-pervading smell of bear's-grease for many weeks past had tended to upset his nervous system. For one shot he stood. This, luckily, broke the bear's leg. Then he dragged steadily on my arm, while I contrived ineffectually to bombard the silver-tip, who at first indulged in a variety of uncouth antics, no doubt savage and wondering at the strange fly that had bitten him, and then, on three legs, galloped for a neighbouring belt of timber.

Meanwhile the whole pack-train had filed into view, and our men watched with amusement what they were subsequently pleased to describe as a circus.

But no halt was made. Jack and Bob were obviously in a great hurry to move on, and afterwards explained that they feared my shots would be heard by the Indians, who might take a notion to follow us. No such idea had entered my inexperienced head. That bear had to be killed; and our party disappeared in the distance down the valley as I followed the wounded silver-tip—a well-grown two-year-old—into the timber, there found and killed him, took his skin and claws, and hustled on the tracks of our party, whom I did not catch up until dark.

Four days' steady travelling took us out of the Bighorn Range; but Jack was uneasy in his mind and bubbling with profanity until we were once again south of the desert and the Rattlesnake Range. What he chiefly feared was the theft of our horses. Six well-armed men would only be attacked by Indians if caught napping and taken by surprise. But to steal all our horses would have been an irresistible temptation and an easy feat for a redskin marauding band, and to compel a westerner to travel home 200 miles on foot was almost as bad as taking his scalp or his life.

Fortunately, nothing of the kind occurred. We soon after reached our ranch with a goodly load of twenty-two bearskins and fourteen big-horn heads, the largest of which latter trophies measured 39 inches along the curve of the horn and 18 inches round the base, as well as a couple of buffalo-heads and one or two of good black-tail deer. For the last week of our travel south the stores had run short, and we had learnt by practical experience how easy it is to do without unattainable luxuries. Tea, oatmeal bread, and meat—straight—then made up our bill of fare.

The least interesting of our sporting trophies were the heads of the black-tail deer.

The best western venison, and, to my mind, the poorest sport, is provided by the black-tail buck. This deer skulks in thick cover, carries a pretty but uninteresting head, and when disturbed usually rings. An orthodox stalk after a black-tail deer was most unusual. It was generally a question of riding through steep-sided cañons and along pine-covered hillsides and shooting on sight when a buck was jumped. These animals depend largely on cover and concealment rather than on speed (though they are fast enough) for safety. Once when after elk, I rode round a rocky hill to within 80 yards of a fairly good black-tail buck, standing under a large rock and amid a few small trees. He was in full sight and looking at us. We had plenty of venison and did not want his head, and so rode on unheeding. The buck stood perfectly still, and watched us out of sight without moving a muscle. He thought himself unseen, his gray autumn coat harmonizing exactly with his surroundings. Had we stopped to take a shot, he would no doubt have been off at once, with the bounding, springy gallop characteristic of these deer.

One of the last black-tail I killed, in 1894, was secured in a somewhat curious manner. We were camped on the Three Forks of Snake River late in the fall. The deer were all leaving the Main Divide for winter range on the Red Desert. Venison was necessary for our camp, and I was returning with my hunter after a long day's ride without having seen a single buck, though does were plentiful enough. We were close to camp, out of the good deer-ground, a disappointed pair of horsemen without any prospect

of fresh meat for supper, when my eye was caught by a patch of gray on a bare hillside opposite, right on our path, and some 300 yards away. I put the glass on. Yes, it was a buck lying down and looking at us. We were riding through a hollow, and partially concealed by trees. My companion, a western hunter, would at first hardly believe it, until I gave him the glass. 'Yes, that's a travellin' buck takin' a rest; and a good un he is, too.' By that time I was off my horse and seated on the ground, an elbow on each knee, and had drawn a full bead on the top of his shoulder. 'How far, Jack?' I whispered. 'Over 300 yards,' was the reply.

The first barrel cracked, and a puff of dust flew up a foot below the gray body. Quick as thought, as the buck was rising, the sight was raised a hair's-breadth and the second trigger pressed. 'That fetched him,' said my companion as the head fell prone. A lucky shot, this time a shade too high, had severed the spine. The body of that buck was brought in whole on one of our horses, to delight the eyes and other bodily organs of a hungry camp.

I have occasionally tried, with success, riding in line with another rifle 200 yards apart and a man between, through likely-looking deer-ground. The deer ring, and, when started by one of the line, often run straight into the arms of another rider. The idea of a line of riflemen is not contained in their philosophy. The most artful buck has never calculated on this contingency, and does not understand or provide against it.

Returning again to my narrative of the hunting trip of 1878, it was now the month of October, and the weather was cold. We wanted one or two good

wapiti heads to complete our season's bag, and accordingly proceeded for a fortnight to explore a range of mountains on the east of the North Platte River, this time with a waggon carrying our stores and impedimenta—including a tent stove—in order to obtain some of these truly magnificent trophies.

In spite of all that I have written about the attractions of hunting big-horn, grizzlies, or buffalo—no matter what I may have said as to the delightful variety of Rocky Mountain big-game in those days—I am prepared now to affirm that the finest wild animal of them all is the mature wapiti bull, that magnificent great red-deer that I have never yet stalked in his native forest without a thrill of extreme admiration for his appearance and great excitement in his pursuit.

Imagine Landseer's 'Monarch of the Glen,' magnified to about twice its size, with horns 60 inches long, the three top points on each side of his twelve-point head not as a crown, but in a plane—the first tine of the three being the longest and heaviest of all—and there you have the 'Monarch of the Divide,' the finest deer in the world. More particularly in the autumn season, in the time of love and war, is he a thing of strength, grace, and beauty. Lean in the flank, with a great black ruff of long hair round his neck, hoarsely whistling and bellowing defiance to all comers till the forest resounds, occupied only in guarding and fighting for his harem of cows, the old bull elk in October is a joy to behold, and an irresistible temptation—in season and in reason—to stalk and to kill.

'Why kill him?' perhaps asks the naturalist and philosopher; 'why not admire and ride away?' Echo

answers: 'Why not, indeed?' As well ask why Scotch deer-forests command fancy rentals and contribute so largely to the rates; why big-game hunters and deer-stalkers are drawn from all sorts and conditions of men, and are thoroughly representative of the genus *homo;* why the world-wide instinct of civilized as well as primitive man is to hunt and kill wild-game; why, in fact, generic man is an omnivorous, carnivorous, predatory animal; and why prime beefsteak in London is—now in this civilized age—still two shillings or more per pound.

But the big-game hunters, for whom I now claim to say a word, have, in fact, done practically nothing to reduce the stock of Rocky Mountain big-game. They have only killed in sweet reasonableness, for sport and healthful excitement and exercise, the old bulls and such-like; and all their combined killing multiplied fivefold would have had no effect on the natural increase of the stock, unless, perhaps, in the case of such game as wolf, bear, and mountain-lion, where no distinctions of age and sex are drawn.

Hide-hunters, settlers, and Indians, who have killed in the past regardless of season, numbers, age or sex, are the real authors of that sad diminution of the wild animal life of the Rockies that has taken place during the past thirty years. Wapiti have only been saved from total extinction by their own natural activity and instincts; by the establishment of game-wardens; by a license to kill that must be paid for; by a restriction on the numbers allowed to be killed per hunter; and last, but not least, by the strictly enforced game sanctity of the Yellowstone National Park.

To return, then, to our reasonable killing. One or two more episodes will suffice.

HEAD OF GREEN RIVER, WYOMING.

ON GROS VENTRES RANGE.

TAKING WAPITI HEAD TO CAMP.

We were camped—my friend and I—during the sunny, chilly Indian summer of Wyoming, at the foot of a mountain range then full of deer, elk, etc., now a vast summer stock range. At night, through the pine-woods, the whistling of rival bulls was at that time a familiar sound. One day Bob Snell and I were bent on exploring a certain hill where, the day before, a particularly hoarse note had betokened the presence of an old bull. Presently we came to some very fresh tracks of a large herd of elk. The whole forest seemed to smell of them. 'I think we'll leave our horses, Bob,' said I. Bob agreed. We advanced cautiously on foot, and soon came in sight of some cow elk feeding. A patient examination of the thick forest through my binoculars gradually revealed a good-sized herd—here a cow lying down, there another, only the head and ears visible—and every now and then one or two would feed into and again out of sight. There must be a good bull somewhere in charge, we knew, if we could only ascertain on which side of the herd he stood or lay. Suddenly a hoarse challenge on the far side of the cows rang out, higher up the hill, and yet again from one spot. Bob and I exchanged a triumphant glance. 'He sounds his own death-knell,' thought I, as my companion whispered: 'That's a big bull, and he's lyin' down, I reckon, t'other side of the herd.'

We carefully retreated, and made a long détour, with a favourable wind, in order to approach the side where the bull lay. To stalk in thick timber up to a bull through a herd of cows was an impossible task. The country was rough and broken, fallen timber lay here and there; our progress was necessarily slow, but an hour later found us on the far side of where

we had heard the bull whistle, and the final stage of the stalk began. I advanced slowly from tree to tree with picked and noiseless step, my companion a yard or two behind, my finger on trigger of rifle and my thumb on cock, searching with anxious gaze every opening through the forest in front. We were on a wooded hill which descended rapidly beyond a ridge in front. Soon we were near the ridge, without a sight or sound of elk.

My heart began to sink. 'I believe they're gone,' I whispered to my companion; but he shook his head. Slowly we crept forward another yard and gained another 20 feet of sight over the ridge. 'Kill that bull,' suddenly whispered Bob; and there, some 60 yards in front of me, through an opening in the trees, I saw the dark head and ruffed neck of a bull elk looking straight at us. He had heard us, and had that moment risen from his mid-day couch.

'That's not the big one, Bob,' I whispered, for I could see a pair of horns, and they did not look large enough.

'Kill him, I tell yer,' growled Bob, 'and then run in.'

I took a fine sight below the chin and pressed the trigger. The forest resounded with the roar of the rifle, and the head vanished in a cloud of smoke. I rushed forward, loading as I ran, past the body of a fair-sized bull elk—my shot had broken his neck—into a small glade, and 'There's yer bull!' whispered Bob, as a gigantic yellow-brown body rose quickly into view on the other side of the open glade, 80 yards away, and a splendid old elk of the largest kind stood for a moment to gaze at the intruders.

He had been lying guarding his harem down the hill below him, and keeping the younger bull I had just killed at a respectful distance. One stride would take him out of sight down the hill; this I knew. I also knew that he carried a magnificent head, the best I had seen that season. I was, therefore, overkeen and jumpy. With eye glued on the broad yellow side 6 inches behind the shoulder, I fired a rapid right and left, loaded and fired again as he staggered forward, stumbled, and then fell, with a crash, stone-dead.

My first shot—I knew at the time that it was high—had just grazed the back, and was to all intents and purposes a miss. Fortunately, a quick second barrel had pierced his heart, and the last two shots were really unnecessary. He carried a noble fourteen-point head of 58 inches that now adorns the house in which I write. Bob had correctly and rapidly diagnosed the situation. Had I not killed the smaller bull and run in at once, we had never seen his lordly rival and master.

One of the more exciting methods of elk-hunting that I frequently practised was to run them on horseback. This could best be done in the rutting season, when the bulls kept with large herds of cows in more open ground. A good horse was absolutely necessary for this work, and some judgment was also required in riding cunning and choosing the ground. To run a solitary bull was usually a hopeless task; but where they were with a large herd, and the ground was favourable, a shot could often be obtained this way better than by still-hunting. A large herd could, somehow, never travel so quickly as the solitary animal, and when going at speed the master stag of a herd was, owing to his heavier weight, invariably last.

With a friend, I once ran three bulls apart from any herd, and we succeeded in getting the finest head of the three by riding wide of one another on either flank, and so turning them from one to the other as to make them lose ground. Our western hunter and companion on that occasion had a bird's-eye view of the whole chase from start to finish, from a high bluff where we had left him on sighting the bulls below, and where, as he was riding a slow horse, he 'calculated' to stay and 'watch the fun.'

On another occasion I was out alone near the Rim of the Hole, unfortunately on a slow horse, my favourite mount Pinto having that day been left in camp for a rest, when I jumped a very fine old bull elk in the open country. He had been lying on a sage-covered hillside, and took straight across the open prairie to the Medicine Bow Range, about ten miles distant. It was a splendid opportunity for a fair run in the open after a single bull, and I have always deeply regretted that on that occasion I had the wrong mount. The bull had a half-mile start, and I ran my slow old cow-pony to a complete standstill in five or six miles without getting within shot, though at first I gained a little on the bull.

Occasionally a drive could be tried with success, though the opportunity for this was rare. This manœuvre could only be successfully attempted when the formation of the ground and the position of the herd were particularly favourable.

In the autumn of 1887 I obtained a good bull in this way. The locality was on the western slope of the Great Divide, at an elevation of 8,000 feet above the sea, where steep and precipitous ravines or cañons run down for miles through dense pine-forest to the

A 58-inch 14-point Wapiti Head.

more open prairie-land below. Some of these cañons are so steep-sided and narrow that, riding towards them, their existence is unknown until, suddenly arriving on their brink, one finds further progress effectually barred. The plateau on the far side seems a short rifle-shot away, but it may be half a day's journey to get there. In the place I write of, two of these steep cañons, starting near the summit of the main range of the Rockies, joined some ten miles below, enclosing between them a gradually narrowing plateau of thick forest and open glade, broken here and there by smaller valleys, and forming a perfect natural park for deer. This plateau terminated in a rounded and less precipitous hillside, where the two cañons met and joined in one large and well-watered valley or strath. The rounded termination of the plateau was covered with well-worn game-trails, showing it to be a favourite pass for herds of elk.

Our party of two — the writer and a ranchman —had crossed the head of one of the cañons, and, with favourable wind, had spent the day in stalking down the plateau between. In the forenoon a solitary twelve-point bull had been encountered, and, after a short stalk, had duly met his fate in the shape of a rifle bullet through the heart. The rest of the afternoon had been spent in vainly endeavouring to get sight of what was evidently, from his hoarse note, a fine old bull, who in the thickest of the pine timber, with a band of cows in charge, had been sounding his deep-voiced challenge far and wide. The 'whistling' or rutting season was at its height, and the bull I speak of was being challenged back on either side by two others not much inferior in size, each evidently accompanied by his respective harem

of faithful cows. In all my elk-hunting days I never heard a better trio. However, the short October day was drawing in, and, after spending an hour or two in the vain endeavour to get a shot by still-hunting, different tactics were tried. The enclosing ravines were steep and rocky, and the ground favourable for a drive.

Our first step was to show ourselves to the nearest cows, and move all three bands of elk forward. They presently joined, and the master stag of the three at once seized the opportunity of driving the other two off and appropriating the united bands of cows to himself. This interesting sight we witnessed in an open park half a mile ahead, as they moved along. Leaving my companion to keep behind the herd, and move it in the right direction, I made a rapid détour ahead on more open ground, and posted myself for the drive at the junction of the cañons aforesaid, where, concealed in low cover at the top of an open hillside, I could command a view of the strath beneath. This was my last chance, and it was rapidly getting dusk. The progress of the herd had been slow, owing to the thickness of the pine-forest through which they were making their way, and, as it turned out, I reached the pass just in time.

After a short suspense—yes, that was the leading hind coming out of cover half a mile below! There were two diverging trails round the crest of the hill. If they came by the right they would get my wind, and I should never see the old bull of the herd, who was bringing up the rear. If to the left, the whole herd would file by me at 60 yards, and the old bull was mine. Steadily the leading hind came on, followed by a band several hundreds strong, whilst

far in the rear a splendid pair of antlers showed the presence of the monarch of the glen. Which trail will they take ? The leading animal, a ragged-looking old cow elk, came to the parting of the trails a quarter of a mile below, hesitated, took the left hand, and sealed the doom of her lord and master. It was an interesting and exciting moment. Crouched in a bush, not stirring a muscle, I watched the whole herd trot silently by. Last of all came my old friend, who had been bellowing a melodious chorus at his rivals for the last two hours. A low whistle, and he stops, broadside on, 60 yards away, when following the crack of the rifle came the dull thud of bullet on living hide, 'dear to the sportsman's ear as the voice of her he loves.' It was an easy chance and a clean kill, and after plunging a few yards headlong down the steep hillside, over rolled the old bull wapiti, stone-dead.

So concluded that particular successful day's sport in the Wild West, and long after dark that night we got back to camp, tired but content, with the hide, head, and horns of our wapiti strapped on one of our horses. Next morning I turned my back for many a long day on the land of the buffalo and the elk.

CHAPTER X

ON THE ISLAND OF VANCOUVER

HAVING finished my business in the city of San Francisco, I determined on a visit to the Island of Vancouver. It was the month of September, when deer were at their best, when salmon and sea-trout were running up the streams and rivers of the west, and when a hunting and fishing trip was obviously opportune. Leaving the metropolis of the Pacific coast, with its regular streets, its gigantic hotels, its perfect cable-car system, and its temperate climate, behind me, I went north one evening in a railway sleeping-car, and some forty hours later found myself under the British flag in the town of Victoria, British Columbia. I had traversed *en route* some of the most fertile valleys of Northern California, smiling with their harvests of pears and peaches, hops and wheat; crawled round Mount Shasta; crept backwards and forwards along wooden trestle viaducts, that would have horrified a British Board of Trade inspector, over the Siskiyou Mountains; traversed the State of Washington; crossed the majestic Columbia River; and steamed from Seattle over the international boundary along Puget Sound to Victoria, on the south end of the Island of Vancouver.

The town of Vancouver, not to be confused with its namesake island, lies opposite, on the mainland, and is the western terminus of the four-thousand-mile Canadian Pacific Railroad—the longest railway in the British Empire.

In reference to the wooden trestle viaducts mentioned above a good story is told. The railway zigzags over these viaducts to and fro as it gradually climbs the mountain range, and, looking out of the car window, one can see straight below the section of railroad and high wooden trestle that was traversed perhaps half an hour before; and above another section, that will be reached in another half-hour or so. At each end of the straight lengths of viaduct the line curves in serpentine fashion, or double-loop. Here the turns are made. The story goes that one dark night the driver of a particularly long train saw ahead of him, as he thought, red danger-lights just when he was rounding a double-loop. He promptly pulled up, only to discover that they were the rear lights of his own guard's-van at the end of his long train!

My object in visiting Victoria was to explore the San Juan river and valley, lying some forty miles away up the west coast of Vancouver Island, and hitherto seldom, if ever, visited by sportsmen. A scheme of State-aided settlement in this valley was then contemplated, and I wished to examine its nature and resources for myself. The sport enjoyed was a natural incident of my trip.

Vancouver is a densely-wooded island, about 100 miles in length, covered for the most part with magnificent spruce and cedar trees, second only in height and girth to the timber of the State of

Washington. If report is true, this same State of Washington should have been British territory, but for the fact that the British representative on the International Boundary Commission of that day allowed it to go to Uncle Sam by default, after he had discovered that the 'blasted' salmon in the Columbia River did not rise to the fly. This latter fact is, at all events, undoubtedly true. Columbia's salmon are caught by net and trap, but not by the guileful fly.

To return to Vancouver and its woods, the valley of San Juan is unapproachable by road. To get there meant a voyage up Puget Sound, past Cape Flattery, out into the Pacific Ocean for a few miles, and then into a land-locked bay. No regular steamers ran. I got over this first difficulty by chartering a small and evil-smelling steam-tug for a week; and the second night after my arrival in Victoria I set sail for the San Juan valley with a supply of stores, a rifle, and a trout-rod, bent both on acquiring information and seeking sport.

That voyage I shall not easily forget, though it only lasted for a night. The skipper was drunk. Fortunately, the engineer knew his business. The deck-house or cabin which I occupied was a lofty and top-heavy construction, and once past Cape Flattery and in the Pacific swell, where half a gale was blowing, the roll was tremendous. We occasionally lay on our beam-ends. The engineer subsequently confided to me his whilom fear that we were going to capsize. However, about 6 a.m. we swung round a headland into San Juan Bay, much to my relief, and anchored close to a small Indian settlement at the mouth of the river. Dense forest and scrub clothed the valley

down to the sea-shore. A few hundred yards from the mouth of the river on one side of the bay two enterprising Victorians had established a small factory for extracting the oil from the dog-fish caught on lines in the bay. One of these men had accompanied us on the steam-tug, and at intervals had filled me full of information on the subject of the San Juan valley and its resources, consisting mainly of timber, fish and seal in plenty, with ultimate agricultural facilities of the best kind if and when the valley was cleared.

To come now to our sport. Having spent a day in examining the factory and obtaining the information I required, I started the following morning up the river in a canoe, paddled by two Indians engaged for the occasion, with tent and stores. The engineer, of a sporting turn, with his dog and gun, also accompanied me, and together we formed a very fair boat-load. Resisting for the present the temptation of trying for the salmon I had seen leaping in the bay, I determined to explore the river as high as possible.

The rain was descending in torrents, but this in no way interfered with sport. The engineer and myself had waterproof coats, and at the last moment I had borrowed a pair of long 'gum' boots from the waiter at the hotel, which came in most usefully. Our heads were protected with those light felt hats which are made nowhere better than in America. Though it rained steadily off and on for three days, mine never let in a drop of water. The Indians neither possessed nor appeared to require any special protection from the weather.

Better hunting companions than these two particular redskins I never wish to meet. They were quiet and handy, paddled and poled the laden canoe

upstream through shallow, rapid and pool with a marvellous ease and deftness, had eyes like hawks for game or game-sign, and were as keen for sport as anyone could wish.

Their habits were of the simplest kind. I had spent part of the afternoon in fishing for the sea-trout that were running up a rising water, and had excellent sport, getting about a dozen good fish, up to 4 pounds in weight, on large loch flies. My Indian companions were much interested in the process, and helped me to land the fish; but when supper-time came, instead of fresh fried trout, they preferred, strange to relate, the carcass of a deceased and apparently diseased salmon picked up on a bank *en route*. Everyone to his taste, thought I. The rather tedious work of frying our supper over a fire of damp wood at the mouth of the tent may possibly have influenced their choice. Cookery is not a strong point with the typical Red Indian.

On our way up the river, and a few miles from the mouth, we had passed a natural barrier of fallen and drifted spruce-trees, that necessitated a portage of about half a mile through the forest to another canoe above the barrier. A wilder scene of natural confusion I have seldom, if ever, witnessed than that presented by this mass of huge monarchs of the forest, some of them at least 9 feet in diameter, and from 150 to 200 feet long, lying heaped in a tangled mass for some hundreds of yards along the river-bed in every imaginable position. This barrier had evidently been the work of years, and was a startling testimony to the strength and height of spring floods. Some great fallen tree had once, no doubt, stuck in its passage down on a flood, and every season had

added to the mass of fallen and drifted trees behind it, until the present impassable tangle had been the result. A high spring flood raging over and through this gigantic obstacle would have been a sight worth seeing.

Having carried our tent and stores through the forest to the river above, we re-embarked in a fresh canoe and continued our course upstream, stopping here and there to take a cast in a likely-looking rapid or pool.

The engineer had already killed a couple of ducks with his gun, but now strict silence was enjoined, for we had seen fresh deer-tracks on a sand-bank, and in another place the track, evidently not many days old, of a good-sized bear. Presently we turned off the main river into a branch leading into a lake, where at some distance off there showed once or twice the round, dark, human-looking head of what was evidently a hair-seal. I tried to get near enough for a shot, but the Indians shook their heads. The seals had evidently been following running fish up the river, but to get a shot at this wary animal in its native element was quite another matter. In the lake we found it impossible, and returned to the main stream. Shortly after, having poled up a rapid, we came to a long pool of the river, narrow but deep, at the far end of which we again saw a seal's head, some 200 yards away, gazing inquiringly in our direction. As we quickly paddled up he disappeared.

Now for a masterpiece of strategy. All is fair in love and war. I hastily communicated my plan to the Indians, and was quietly landed on the rocks at the lower end of the pool, the canoe then proceeding on its course upstream. The result from my point

of view was eminently satisfactory. The idea of an ambush was not contained in the seal's philosophy. The expected event occurred, in this instance, exactly as anticipated. As the canoe approached the far end of the pool, the seal dived back through its depths, and his head quietly reappeared at my end of the pool again, some 200 yards from the canoe, but within 20 yards of where I sat, rifle in hand, under the leafy shadow of the bank. The next moment a rifle bullet pierced that same round head, and the seal was mine. We easily retrieved the great body in the shallow at the foot of the pool. I took the skin and gave the body to the Indians, who hung it in a tree for future use.

The afternoon was now getting on, and we began to search for a suitable camping-place. This at first appeared no easy matter. The dense forest on each bank, thick with undergrowth, was dripping wet from rain, and also required clearing in order to pitch the tent. Poling up the next rapid, we presently came to a high sand-bank clear of trees and brush, and evidently above the line of any ordinary autumn flood. The weather obligingly cleared for an hour before sundown, and we managed to pitch the tent on the highest part of the sand-bank, and make a most comfortable camp. The sand did not hold the moisture, and gave excellent bedding-ground. Indian woodcraft soon lit a fire from the inside chippings of fallen tree-trunks, and fried trout, tinned beef, and biscuits, afforded an excellent supper.

Next morning we were early astir. I continued the journey up the river in the canoe with rod and rifle, leaving the engineer to go after wild-duck with dog and gun downstream, arranging to meet at the tent at nightfall. The Indians accompanied me on what proved to be a day of thoroughly varied sport. Every

likely-looking stream and pool was fished for a mile or two above our camp, with good results. Prettier fishing water I have seldom seen. In a couple of hours half a score of fresh-run sea-trout, averaging nearly 2 pounds in weight, lay in the bow of the canoe, and I began to think it time to use the rifle.

The opportunity was nearer than I thought. Here and there, to right and left, ran occasional small streams and watercourses, affluents or backwaters to the main stream, up which it was possible to see at times for some distance through the forest. We were quietly paddling along a still stretch of river and passing one of these watercourses, when I felt the canoe swung suddenly round by a powerful stroke of the steersman's paddle and into the watercourse. 'See!' said Dick, the Indian, pointing with some eagerness up the narrow avenue of the watercourse. At first I could make out nothing. Then presently I became aware of a gray back some 300 yards away beyond a fallen tree, and, yes, a good pair of antlers above it. A good buck deer was crossing the backwater, had stopped to drink and gaze, and had been picked up like lightning by Dick's sharp eyes as we passed the entrance of the watercourse. Luckily the wind was right, and the deer had not seen us owing to the leafy shade of the river-banks. It was an exceedingly lucky find. We had happened to catch a good buck unawares in one of the few places in the valley where it was possible to do so. Crouching low in the canoe, we paddled quickly on behind the convenient shelter of a fallen tree. Now the canoe was stopped, and I quietly crawled along a sandy bank up to the fallen tree, over which I cautiously peeped. There stood the buck 150 yards away, close to the

edge of the forest, evidently on the point of entering its dense cover. He was gazing suspiciously in our direction—had probably seen some movement, but not enough to be certain what the danger was. These are the thrilling moments of a stalk. A hasty movement or a turn of ill-luck might lose the chance.

Two red men, with thoughts intent on fat venison steaks, watched my every movement as I quietly insinuated the barrel of the rifle over the friendly tree-trunk and drew a bead on the sleek gray side of the deer. As I pulled he seemed to vanish.

We made our way up the bank of the watercourse on foot, and followed on the track. Here the red men's craft came in. Once in the forest I could see no sign, but Dick and his companion were thoroughly at home. They followed for some 50 yards a trail absolutely invisible to me ; presently, with some slight show of excitement, pointed to a drop of blood on a leaf ; followed on another few hundred yards, and there, stone-dead, lay a fine black-tail buck, shot through the body a trifle too far back.

It is not necessary to dwell on the remaining incidents of this three days' hunt. We lunched gorgeously on fat ribs of venison roasted. We took two fat haunches back to the canoe. We caught more trout higher up the river. Late that afternoon we jumped a small black bear near the head of the valley, and I killed him with a lucky downhill shot. We returned downstream after dark in a most cheerful frame of mind, to find the engineer with six couple of duck anxiously awaiting our arrival at the tent. Next day we returned to the skipper and the steam-tug, killing another buck—this time a small one—on the way home ; and the following day found us back in Victoria.

CHAPTER XI

SALMON-FISHING

It was in the Orkla River, in Norway, that I killed my first salmon thirty-two years ago; and I have been a devoted disciple of the 'gentle art' ever since. There is a mysterious fascination about a bending rod and a whirring reel, and a thin line cutting the clear water of loch or stream or river, while the creature of another element, felt, but only occasionally seen, is fighting for its life, that is somewhat difficult to explain to the uninitiated, and is occasionally out of proportion to the results obtained. But this fascination holds sway, all the same, over a large class of all sorts and conditions of men, from the rustic angler, pond-fishing with a bait, to the member of the Santa Catalina Tuna Club, who may have killed his two-hundred-pounder after a ten hours' fight in the waters of the Pacific.

Generally the sport appeals strongly to the gambling element in human nature. The Thames punt-fisher sits for hours without a bite. But any moment the bite may come. The salmon-fisher may flog a rushing river for hours or days without a rise. But at every cast the thought recurs that now the big fish of his dreams may take the fly. The thrill of an uncertain

anticipation is always there. 'Once a fisherman, always a fisherman,' is doubtless a true saying, and will always, I believe, remain good, though I question if it can be so accurately applied to any other sport. Hunting and shooting men may tire in time of what once may have been their favourite relaxation, or perchance the day arrives when they get too busy or too old for the game. But no true disciple of Isaac Walton is ever too old or too busy, while sufficient health remains, to go a-fishing if opportunity, ever so brief, shall serve.

It is also certain that the fascination of fishing, when once it has taken hold, grows upon one with the lapse of time and the growth of years; and I fancy that this, again, is more than can be said for any other form of sport. This apart from golf, which, after all, is not a sport, but a game.

In the heyday of youthful manhood one is naturally inclined to pursuits more strenuous than fishing. Also the fascination of the rod and line, already mentioned, has, perchance, not then had time or opportunity to be felt. But when once it has been experienced, and has fairly taken root, then it is there to stay. And if this be true of angling in general, it is certainly true of salmon-fishing in particular.

But a truce to these moralizings and generalities. Let us come to some narrative and incident.

In July of 1872 Alexander MacGregor and I, having concluded the lease of our first Hitteren deer-forest, so called, went across the fjord to the mainland of the Throndhjem Amt, a-fishing for trout, and even for salmon if we could haply catch them.

One day we found ourselves, after divers wanderings, on the banks of a fine rushing river that

helped to drain the Norway fjelds into Throndhjem fjord.

'Here,' said my companion, as we looked on the river Orkla with all the pleasure of anticipation, 'is some water worth fishing.' And so we fished it for a fortnight, and were quite content.

We caught nothing very large, it is true. MacGregor hooked an eighteen-pound salmon fresh from the sea the first evening we tried it. I gaffed the fish for him, and we agreed that this was more exciting than the trout-fishing we had just experienced in the streams of the Hevne fjord. But the Quaale water of the Orkla, to which our fate had directed us, was then freely netted by the natives, and from a Scandinavian standpoint was not first-class fishing for the angler.

Next morning my turn came. So far I had never killed anything larger than a three-pound sea-trout. But in a pool below the farmhouse where we lodged, fishing out of a boat with a native, I felt for the first time the drag of a fresh-run salmon; then came the bending rod, the tight line, and the screaming reel; and after ten minutes or so of breathless excitement the gaff was safely tucked into the gleaming side of a bright ten-pound fish. And so I became a keen salmon-fisher for life.

During the next fortnight we killed about twenty salmon and grilse; waded up to our necks in the rushing waters of the Orkla; fell even deeper in love than before with the bracing northern air, the people, and the sports of Throndhjem Amt; and concluded by taking a lease of the Quaale beat, including a purchase of some of the nets that had formerly played havoc with the salmon therein.

I fished the Quaale beat of the Orkla for several happy seasons after that year. The water was too near to the mouth of the river for really first-class sport in point of numbers. Also the heavy fish usually ran in the month of June, which was earlier in the season than we were generally able to get out from England. But we were well satisfied with our bargain, nevertheless, though we never there killed a fish over 25 pounds. This, so far as I remember, was the record for our beat.

It may have been my youthful fancy, but our Orkla salmon, fresh run from the waters of the North Sea, played, according to my recollection, stronger and faster than any salmon I have elsewhere killed.

Many a time my forefinger has been cut by the running-line, occasionally to the bone, as some strong eighteen-pound fish ran headlong down the stream. The pools were wide and deep, the current strong, and the sport the fish gave most excellent. I once remember a twelve-pound fish, hooked fairly in the mouth, taking a friend of mine, W. Cook, a thoroughly experienced salmon-fisher, three-quarters of an hour to land.

We fished in those days with nothing but the fly, and if Orkla salmon were inclined to move at all, the fly, or, rather, that varied bunch of tinsel, bristles, fur, and feathers, tied with artistic care upon a hook, and which we call a salmon-fly, was usually a sufficiently attractive lure for our purpose.

Why a salmon takes a so-called salmon-fly, and what he takes the said fly to be, are subjects I am not now concerned too seriously to write about, nor even at any time am I inclined to dogmatize thereon.

Judging from experience and observation, these are fishing conundrums past the wit of man accurately, or finally, to solve.

Here, for example, is a concrete case. I was fishing a comparatively small Orkla pool one day with a friend. We often fished in couples. The whole of the particular stream could be covered casting from the bank. I fished it carefully down first with a medium Jock Scott; saw a good fish show, but did not move him to my fly. Then my friend followed after with a Wilkinson, also without result. As if deriding our efforts, the fish now leaped again, a fine fresh-run salmon. Without great hope of getting him, I fished the pool yet a third time with the same fly. On this occasion, as the Jock Scott came over him, there was the boil and the draw which meant a taking rise, then a tight line and bending rod, and the fish, a fifteen-pounder, was duly killed.

Now, mark the argument. If I had changed my fly to something different—neither Jock Scott nor Wilkinson—and so killed the fish, the theorist would confidently have said, and stuck to it, that the change of fly was the cause of the success. Unfortunately for the theorist, I had not changed my fly.

Then, again, having refused two flies in succession, why did the salmon take the third, and this third fly one that he had already seen and sternly refused a few moments before? There seems to be no reason in it. Does a salmon take a fly for fun, like a terrier catching bluebottles, or is he simply hungry? And if hungry, why does his hunger come and go at a moment's notice?

In my weaker moments I am prepared to maintain

that there is no reason in a salmon's ways ; and here, perchance, we are nearest to the real solution of the problem, if any solution there be. And the thought is attractive, for it means that luck may come at any moment, despite all apparently hostile conditions to success, and that the best fly to catch a salmon with is the fly that is oftenest and longest in the water.

It is possible that we credit the salmon with too much intelligence, and want to have a why and wherefore for actions that are merely impulsive on the part of the fish.

One day I hooked a good fish in the Orkla, and lost him after fifteen minutes' play. He was dead beat and ready for the gaff, when—sickening sensation—the cast broke and the rod straightened.

A week later, in the same pool and on a similar fly, I hooked, and this time landed, the same fish. There was my first fly in his mouth.

Clearly, that particular salmon was not intelligent ; otherwise he would have carefully avoided the strange insect that had caused him so much inconvenience a few days before. And if so unintelligent, can he, or does he, really discriminate between slightly varying colours of hackle, body or wing, or even, within reason, between slightly different sizes of fly.

Arguing of the class from the individual, and judging from the kind of instances mentioned above —of which plenty more could be given—we may believe of salmon generally that the fish which rise to a fly—and doubtless there are a certain number of fish that never rise to the fly at all—do so from some wayward and erratic impulse which we cannot accurately analyze, and that these same fish are not too particular about the kind of fly, provided—and

this, after all, is the great thing—that the fly is shown them in the proper way and at the psychological moment when the impulse to take something of the kind is in them. If this be true—and I hope it is—then we have in the consequent glorious and complete uncertainty of salmon-fishing a great and sufficient reason for its lasting fascination. The pursuit of some wayward, impulsive, and beautiful creature—for the salmon in its way is beautiful—for whose conduct, under any given set of circumstances, there are no reliable data to guide us, has always, and will always, attract the sons of men.

The charms of this uncertainty all fishermen have, no doubt, amply proved and enjoyed in their own experience.

A favourite pool in the Quaale beat was the Long Pool, an ideal salmon stream. At the head ran a strong white current, gradually widening out without any too violent curls or boils into a smooth, broad, steadily-running water, every part of which, for 80 to 100 yards wide and 150 long, was theoretically good for a taking fish. The one bank was a long, gravelly bed; the other, steep, grassy, and tree-covered.

It could be fished from a boat, and also, the best part of it, by deep wading from the gravelly bank.

One of its peculiarities was that it seldom fished alike for consecutive days. It would go off and lose its character for a week, and then, when least expected, would yield half a dozen fish or more in an afternoon.

It was after one of these unlucky weeks on this particular pool that MacGregor decided one day to try the water above the foss, and left me to give the Long Pool another turn.

I fished it alone, and so required to land my own fish, if and when I hooked them.

It was one of those lucky days when all went well. I started by hooking a ten-pounder just where the current widened out into the broader sweep, and duly beached him on the gravel. Then followed a run of fortune. Every third or fourth cast I was into another fish, none of them large, and landed every one.

Eventually MacGregor appeared from the upper water with one good fish of 18 pounds, to find me smoking the pipe of satisfaction, and seven fish from 7 to 14 pounds lying on the gravel at my feet.

I had no doubt happened by chance to meet a school of fresh-run salmon that for a few hours were resting in the Long Pool before facing the strong rapid above.

This was really an instance of 'duffer's luck,' for the river had not been fishing well at the time, and what few fish were running were inclined to move quickly through our beat to the upper stretches of the river.

There is no doubt that 'duffer's luck' is a real and constant feature in all forms of sport—possibly designed by a kindly Providence for the encouragement of young beginners.

A young man I knew once left Euston by the night mail to fish the Irish Erne. He knew little or nothing of salmon-fishing, and had never previously set eyes on the noble river he was going to fish.

Arriving at Ballyshannon next afternoon, he promptly was taken by Pat Rogan, his appointed gillie, to a favourite stream on the south bank, known

as the Sod Ditch. There he dangled a Green Parson in the stream, which kindly straightened his line for him and gave to the fly an appearance of life. Next moment it was seized by a heavy salmon, which at first cruised gently about, as large fish will sometimes do when first hooked, not quite knowing what had happened. Pat, one of the best gaffers in Ireland, waded out to a convenient ledge of rock, swiftly tucked the steel hook into a broad silvery side, 3 feet below the surface of the water, and the next moment a forty-one-pound fresh-run salmon from the Atlantic lay kicking on the grass. It was the largest salmon killed on Erne that year, and the angler had not fished the water for an hour.

Another youth once obtained leave to fish a stretch of the Eden that I know well, about three miles from Carlisle. He knew something of trout-fishing, but had never killed a salmon. With a wisdom beyond his years, he engaged a canny old fisherman, who knew every yard of the water, to go with him, and drove out in a hansom cab, which, with all the insolence of youth, he kept waiting in the road, while, dressed in ordinary city garb and a pot-hat, he went down to a grassy bank to fish a well-known stream, then in perfect autumn order.

After a few casts there came a mighty boil in the smooth-running stream, and the novice, raising his hand too soon, snatched away the fly. Again another cast and another boil, with the same result. For any ordinary fisherman this would have settled matters. The fish would have retired disgusted from the scene. But, as the hero of this tale was a novice and technically a duffer, the fish of course came a third time. The old fisherman now interposed, put his hand on

the youth's arm, prevented a premature strike, and 'Now you're in him, sir!' he exclaimed.

In due course a fine autumn fish of 35 pounds was landed and promptly taken back in triumph in the cab to Carlisle, the whole incident not having occupied an hour.

The old fisherman who accompanied the novice had never, in thirty years' experience, killed so heavy an Eden fish; and no experienced angler could have hoped to accomplish such a feat in the time and the manner described.

But 'duffer's luck' is not necessarily confined to the young. There is a story of an elderly clergyman who once paid a visit to a friend of his who lived and owned a fishing on the Wye. This friend was an old and enthusiastic angler, the one ambition of whose life was to kill a forty-pound salmon. He had fished all over the kingdom, had killed fish of 35 pounds and upwards, even to 39 pounds; but had never actually achieved his full ambition. To him arrives the ancient parson, a keen trout-fisher, but whose knowledge and experience of the nobler fish was nil.

The morning after his arrival it so happened that the host was detained at home by business; or possibly the river was not in the best order. Any way, the inexperienced guest was despatched with an attendant to fish the water by himself. He was directed where and how to fish, and proceeded to dangle his salmon-fly in a certain pool. As fate willed, the fly was promptly seized by a salmon; after three-quarters of an hour's wild excitement on the part of the angler, the fish was duly gaffed, and found to scale exactly 40 pounds. But this was not all. The now almost-delirious-with-joy guest proceeded to flop

his fly a second time in the same pool, and again a salmon rose and was hooked. Big fish, as is well known, often run, and occasionally rise, in pairs. So it chanced on this occasion. The second salmon was duly played and landed, and found to weigh exactly 41 pounds.

The precise feelings of the host, on his arrival on the scene just as the second fish was gaffed, and in what words he expressed them, have not been recorded. But, as ordinary mortals, we must suppose that his joy at his guest's success was chastened by the thought that in a bare two hours' fishing the tyro had accomplished, in twofold measure, what the life-long expert had failed to achieve.

Such, then, are some of the chequered incidents of an enthralling sport. But the tyro does not always have things his own way.

One day W. Cook and I paid a visit, by invitation, to the Sundal River, which helps to drain the same fjeld as the Orkla, but flows west instead of north, and into the Christiansund fjord.

The visit involved a two days' carriole drive up the Orkla Valley, and over the divide into the valley of the Sundal, through some wild and typical Norwegian scenery of pine-clad hillside and rocky peaks. We found the Sundal low and clear. There was only one pool, a deep and rocky stream, in good order. The friends who had invited us had left a few days before.

There were always heavy fish in the Upper Sundal late in July, and we started operations on the evening of our arrival with all the additional pleasure derived from the fishing of new water.

That evening Cook killed a good fish of 17 pounds,

while I did nothing. Next day we took different sides of the river, and I started fishing at the head of the rocky stream mentioned. My attendant, Lars, a good-natured, simple-minded Norske native, was not a regular fisherman, as I afterwards learned, and was new to the use of the gaff. As I was getting out my line at the very head of the current, and before I had made a single cast, there was a drag: I raised my hand and was fast in a heavy fish.

Then came nearly an hour's wild excitement. The fish ran up and down the pool, and finally out of it and down to the next pool, before I could get on terms with him. Then, after that, the closing scene.

The salmon was gradually brought to a shelving bank of gravel—obviously weighing anything between 30 and 50 pounds—and lay exhausted on its side in 6 inches of water. I turned to Lars with eager exclamation, and looked upon the fish as mine. But Lars seemed paralyzed. He stood on the bank, helplessly gazing; then finally, urged to effort by plain Anglo-Saxon speech, made a thrust with the gaff, missed the salmon, and—broke the cast. I threw down the rod, snatched the gaff from his grasp, and just missed retrieving the fish as it wobbled slowly back into deep water.

There are moments when all one's philosophy is required to face the situation—when a severe strain is imposed upon one's charity. For a moment I looked on Lars with a bitter, though silent, hatred, and felt that there were no adjectives in the English language that could do adequate justice to the occasion.

Silence and tobacco gradually relieved the tension and restored us both to a more peaceful frame of

mind. But I fully agreed with the view once expressed by Colonel Bromley Davenport in relating a a similar experience, that, if the fish had only consented to be weighed and then returned to its native element, he would gladly have accepted the compromise.

One of the nuisances of the Orkla River was its timber trade. Logs that had been cut the previous winter in the mountains were floated down stream the following summer months to Orkedal-sœren. These same logs occasionally interfered with our fishing, and now and then, floating down a pool, would nearly tumble a wading angler head-over-heels into 4 feet of water as he, forgetful, was watching his fly fishing down stream.

Occasionally they served a useful purpose for our party. We used to rope four logs together for a raft, and so at times return downstream to our home quarters a mile or two below.

Owen Leggatt, a member of our fishing-party, and I were one day fishing the Long Pool. He had been fishing in the boat and had no waders. So, in a backwater, it devolved on me, in waders, to rope four logs together for our journey home.

Perhaps the logs chosen were too small, but having carefully carried Leggatt on my back to the improvised raft, then having deposited a fifteen-pound freshly-caught salmon thereon, and then Ole, our boatman, and myself having also embarked on it, the raft slowly sank to the bottom, and everything, including Leggatt, was soaked. What his precise remarks on that occasion were I have forgotten, but in the end Ole was sent home with the fishing-bags by road, while my companion and I launched out into the stream, the raft just carrying our united weights

and the salmon, and no more, and proceeded triumphantly down to Quaale farmhouse.

All went well for a time. Successive rapid stream and deep pool were safely negotiated until we arrived in the deepest pool of all, just below the farmhouse. Then the raft upset. It was cranky, or somebody had sneezed, or made a sudden movement with the paddle we carried to guide us. At all events, we did upset, in 20 feet of water and 50 yards from the bank.

I struggled ashore somehow, but then and there concluded that I did not wish to repeat the experiment of swimming in wading-trousers. Leggatt cannily clambered on to the raft again. The salmon had been thoughtfully tied there. Eventually, having emptied several gallons of water out of my waders, I obtained assistance and a boat, and the raft and its occupants were retrieved a mile lower downstream. My companion was helpless without the paddle, which was lost in the upset, and so sat calmly floating down the wide bosom of the Orkla until overtaken as described.

My recollection is that after this incident rafts were barred, and we returned home thenceforth by road.

How the capture of certain particular salmon dwells in one's memory! In 1876, having passed my final schools at Oxford, I forthwith went to Norway for three months' holiday. In July of that year I was hunting for bear in and around the secluded Bœverdal Valley, some twenty miles inland from Christiansund, and discovered the Bœverdal River. It was a small river for Norway, and out of the ordinary track of anglers. The natives of Bœverdal knew nothing of fly-fishing, though they occasionally angled with

worm. They were, however, as I subsequently discovered, particularly expert with the leister.

I had a twelve-foot trout-rod with me and a few salmon-flies, and one fine evening, having obtained leave from the farmers, I tried a pool in the Bœverdal Elv at its point of junction with a strong tributary stream. I had seen no salmon show, but the water looked likely, though somewhat small. It was a deep stream, with high steep banks on either side, widening out to a shallower, broader current 100 yards down. At the head of this pool in the first few casts I hooked a good twelve-pound fish. On a twelve-foot trout-rod the sport he gave was excellent, and I finally tailed him out 150 yards below in the shallow current, being without attendant at the time.

I subsequently took a short lease of the river, but it proved disappointing, though we had excellent ryper-shooting for two seasons on the fjelds above the Bœverdal Valley. A fair number of salmon used to run at times in this river, but for some reason or other did not take the fly well. Possibly it was too small. Another feature of the place were the seals. Bœverdal Fjord is the only spot in Norway where I have shot a seal, and even that one, I regret to say, we did not retrieve.

Later on that season I was fishing in the Bœverdal River, after a flood, in a pool about a mile from the sea. Presently appeared what I first took to be the sea-serpent himself. It was a seal, swimming up the centre of the river, appearing and disappearing in somewhat serpentine fashion. He was after the salmon, and of course put an end to any chance of sport for the time. I went back to the farmhouse for my rifle, but did not see him again, though a day or

two after I put a bullet through the head of one of his relations in the fjord below. He sank in deep water, and we never recovered him.

It is now many years since I fished the Orkla River. But it has been my later fortune to get out to the Gula Valley, where we hunt the elk, occasionally in time for some late salmon-fishing in the Gula River, which is a parallel and sister river to the Orkla, rising in the same great fjeld and flowing into the same fjord.

One day in 1902 my friend Alexander Henderson, and co-lessee of our elk-forest, had gone up to our Laerdal hut, as elsewhere related. That same day I was journeying to Aasen farm to stalk the head of our elk-forest, which is above the Gula Foss, and Ole Rennan, our chef de cuisine, who was with me, called attention to the fact that fresh fish was required for supper. It was about the middle of September, and Gula River then contains many a fine, fairly-fresh-run salmon in the streams below the fall, where the river debouches from a narrow, pine-clad mountain gorge into the wider valley below. Our road took us along the river-side, and so, the necessity for fresh salmon steaks for supper being clearly present in my mind, I presently alighted from the carriole, sent Ole, the chef, and Hans Aasen, my hunter, on to the farm, and remained behind alone, with a favourite nine-foot split cane trout-rod in my hand, and an old salmon-cast and some Irish Erne salmon-flies in my pocket. I did not know the water, but 200 yards below the deep foss pool was an ideal-looking stream for salmon, to all appearance in excellent order.

Here the river ran fairly deep and swirly—but not

too swirly—through the rocky gorge, and with the nine-foot cane rod I could just manage to switch out the fly halfway across the comparatively narrow throw. I proceeded to fish the said stream with that feeling of confidence occasionally experienced, that sooner or later a fish would come. And, sure enough, three parts down the stream there was a draw on the line: I raised my hand, and found myself fast in something fairly heavy. The situation was sufficiently exciting. It was the first salmon I had hooked that year. The bank was rocky and steep. There was no convenient place to land a good fish. I had no gaff. And, lastly, while the tackle was old, the little nine-foot rod was bent into a hoop, and there was only 30 feet of trout-line on a small reel. There was also a very practical consideration, above all these things, firmly fixed in my mind. My supper partly depended on what was going to happen during the next fifteen or twenty minutes.

But the Fates were kind, and the fish—a clean fourteen-pounder—was most considerate and obliging. He sailed conveniently up and down the stream, but did not try to run out of it. He did not jump too violently, nor sulk beneath any of the numerous rocks in the bed of the river. And, finally, having kindly allowed me to put a string glove on one hand, he eventually consented, after twenty doubtful minutes, to be led into a small rocky bay just above the brink of the pool, and to lie there for five thrilling seconds until I grasped his tail in the gloved hand, heaved him up on to the slippery rock on which I stood, and incontinently fell on him and slew him.

So my supper was secured; and as I walked the three miles to Aasen farm with the fish wrapped up

in a mackintosh under my arm, I began to think it weighed, not 14 pounds, but 40. To complete the pleasing memories of that particular day, a few hours later I received a message that Alec Henderson had killed his first bull elk in Laerdal.

It may be as well here to remind ourselves that it is not necessary to cross the North Sea in order to experience the joys of salmon-fishing.

Some of my happiest fishing holidays have been spent in Ireland, and one has only to read that delightful book 'A Year of Liberty' to appreciate how large and varied a field for the angler is to be found in the Emerald Isle.

It was on the banks of the river Lee, in the South of Ireland, on a bright day in spring, that I first learned how to catch a salmon with a worm. My tutor on that occasion was Richard Barter, of St. Anne's, near Blarney, a thorough all-round sportsman. I shall never forget how he proved by practical experiment that a salmon could be caught in low water and brilliant sunshine with so homely a bait as the worm.

The strictly virtuous and high-class fisherman may possibly frown at the idea of bait-fishing for salmon. So good an all-round sportsman and keen fisherman as my friend Sir Herbert Maxwell, with whom I have fished in company, has, as I happen to know, strong ideas on the subject. But we all of us have our prejudices and our weaknesses.

I must confess to belonging to that class of fishermen who, when they go fishing, like to catch fish—with the fly, of course, for choice. But sometimes salmon will not look at a fly. Then, if circumstances and regulations permit, fall back on some other lure, say I.

The artificial fly is pre-eminently the lure for the salmon-angler. Taking rivers and seasons all round, the fly will easily beat anything else. Moreover, it is a clean and artistic method of catching salmon.

But to say that the fly shall be the only lure is to suggest a paucity of idea, a want of resource, which are very far from being the prevailing characteristics of the angler class. To catch salmon with worm, or prawn, or other bait, is, moreover, a skilful art, requiring some handiness and experience, and also a knowledge of the water and of the habits of the fish. Therefore, if it is lawful to catch salmon at all, let us be permitted, in reason, to use other angling means besides fly, if necessity compels.

Many a blank day have I saved in Irish, Scotch, and Norway waters by means of bait, when at times the fly proved absolutely useless. I remember well a day on the Stinchar River in Ayrshire, late in October. I was staying at Daljarroch with my uncle, W. S. Seton-Karr, and on a certain afternoon found myself on the banks of the Smithy pool.

There had been a good run of autumn fish, but they were in objectionable mood and no fly would move them. I had the gardener's boy in attendance, and by the same token he had at my suggestion brought along a bag of worms from the garden. So I put up an artistic tackle, and searched the bed of the Smithy pool with a fat bunch of worms.

The whole art of the proceeding is so to weight and manœuvre the line that, while rocks are avoided, the worms are presented to each salmon in the pool in natural fashion.

Presently came a slight draw at the line, then a few jerks, then again a steady draw. If the line

is checked, the chances are the fish is balked and frightened from the bait. In due course, raising my hand, there was a good fish at the end of the line, and not long after the gardener's boy was staggering proudly home under the weight of a well-shaped twenty-five-pound autumn fish.

Here is an instance, of which many others could be given—several pages of them, in fact, if need be—where some fertility of resource made all the difference between a full and an empty bag.

I have already alluded to Irish rivers. The Shannon I have never fished. But, apart from this grandest of streams, I know no finer or more beautiful river than the Irish Erne. Scotland has its far-famed salmon-rivers, many of which I have fished, and hope to fish again, as well as some of the salmon waters of Norway, if only the Fates be kind. But if a comparison be not, in this connection, odious, then in some respects the Erne can compare favourably with any river of them all.

If you would know more of it, then away to the north-west coast of Ireland, where the Atlantic breezes blow straight and fresh from the ocean. There it is that the river Erne, flowing along the boundary-line between counties Donegal and Fermanagh, drains Lough Erne into Ballyshannon Bay. Lough Erne is one of the largest lakes in the Emerald Isle, second only in size to Lough Neagh. From the head of the upper lake, south-east of Enniskillen, down to Belleek, where the salmon-river proper begins, is a distance of something like fifty miles. The main lake, extending north-west from Enniskillen for about thirty miles to within three miles of Belleek, is a lovely piece of water, studded here and there

A 28-lb Fish.

Ballyshannon Pool.

Knather Lane.

with islands, bounded on the south with high green hills, and famous for its trout and pike.

It is fitting, then, that the outlet of this great lake should be a correspondingly fine salmon-river—only three Irish miles of fishing water, it is true, but a river of noble proportions, with splendid pools and ideal salmon-streams. The water, moreover, is always clear, and before the drainage-gates at Belleek were put in the river never varied rapidly in height, and wet season or dry, was always more or less fishable. For busy men, who wanted to snatch a fortnight's holiday on a salmon-river, this was an invaluable attraction. No chance, on the Erne, of watching a turbid bank-high flood in which fishing was impossible, or, perchance, a dead low-water trickle in which nothing but a bait in the evening would have been of the slightest use. One could always rely in those days on some good fly-fishing water, and from June to September, on a fairly good stock of fish.

To some extent this has been changed by the by-anglers-freely-anathematized drainage-gates, put in at Belleek some ten years ago. The falls were blasted, the three miles of canal-like river above Belleek dredged to a deeper level, a fish-pass constructed, and great hydraulic-power gates put in where the falls used to be. Thus it happens that the height of this noble river has been made subservient to the prosaic exigencies of commercial enterprise, and is now under the absolute control of an official at Belleek, who obeys the mandates of a soulless and invertebrate company, dead to all ideas of sport, and whose whole philosophy is contained within the four corners of a printed balance-sheet.

A ten-foot flood can be sent down the Erne at any

time, and, as a matter of fact, was at times so sent down when the gates were first constructed. There is a story of a hapless fisherman and his gillie clinging for hours to the branches of a tree on the lower Sally Island in the Erne, until a hasty message at length reached the gatekeeper to cut off some of the water he had let down in so prodigal and unexpected a fashion, or run the risk, on behalf of his company, of an action for manslaughter.

I well remember that particular flood, for I happened to be fishing Earl's throw at the time from the north side, where it is necessary to wade into mid-river along a ridge with deeper water on either hand. As luck would have it, I had hooked a salmon about mid-day, and had waded backwards to shore in order that Terry, my gillie, might gaff the fish. It was Saturday, and a flood was due, we knew, about three o'clock. The fish was duly gaffed, and I was in the water again on my way along the ridge, when from the shore behind came an agonized cry: 'For God's sake, yer honour, come out! she's coming down.'

I turned, and reached the shore, a few yards away, with difficulty. In five minutes or less a raging flood, 10 feet deep, was sweeping over my late wading-ground, and pouring in whirling rapids down to the deep Nova Scotia pool below. Had I been fairly out on the throw, no power on earth could have saved me. The company's official had raised three gates two hours before the stated hour, and then gone calmly to his lunch.

Some kind of a working compromise between fishery-owners and land-reclaimers has now been arrived at, and during the fishing season the gates are kept fairly steady. But the mechanical power

to turn the river into a trickle or a flood at a moment's notice still remains, the object of the gates being, of course, to prevent flooding of lands on the borders of the upper lake.

In spite of these interferences by the hand of man, the Erne still remains, for its short length, one of the finest and most sporting salmon-rivers in the kingdom. It has, of course, suffered, like most other Scotch and Irish rivers, from the generally diminished supply of salmon around the British Isles. It does not yield quite the sport it did, say, twenty years ago. But Erne fishing is still good. There are seven beats between Belleek Gates and Ballyshannon Bridge, fished in daily rotation by seven rods up to 1 p.m., after which hour it is 'go as you please.' Before the drainage era there was another beat at Eel Weir Hill, about two miles above Belleek, where up to ten fresh salmon have frequently been taken by a single rod in a day. The drainage operations have now turned this throw into a sluggish canal, where taking fish no longer lie.

There is yet another beat, not included in the seven, below Ballyshannon Bridge, whereon the fishing goes by favour. Given certain essential conditions, a medium high water, a dull sky, and a strong westerly breeze, and Ballyshannon pool, despite the homely surroundings of the town, is well worth a long day's journey to fish. It is fished mainly from a boat. After the end of June salmon lie in every yard of its two hundred of length. At the tail of it, and near the falls, the current quickens on what is known as the 'rope-walk,' where fish fresh from the sea lie on the very breast. The lowest current of all above the falls can be fished from the rocks, and a good

fish hooked here may go back over the falls into the estuary pool, where it is a 'thousand to three' against its being killed.

At the head of the pool, again, is another of the most sporting throws on the river Erne, where the angler fishes the arches of Ballyshannon Bridge with rod held perpendicularly downwards, and can see a rising fish open its mouth to take the fly. A good fish hooked from the bridge may run out 150 yards of line, or thread one arch up river and another down. These incidents have happened, and lend variety to the sport, which is always watched and freely advised on, when exciting, by a goodly array of the Ballyshannon population. A distinguished General, not long since, played and killed a fish from the bridge to the martial tunes of a brass Volunteer band that happened to be passing at the time. On another occasion an angler, making a longish cast, dropped his hand a little, and hooked a fine retriever dog on the bridge behind him. A splendid run ensued through the streets of Ballyshannon, the angler with tight line, bending rod, and screaming reel only too anxious to save his cast and fly, while the Ballyshannon 'bhoys,' with true sporting instinct, cheered dog and man impartially, while carefully refraining from any interference.

The Erne is a deep-wading river, and has witnessed many an involuntary ducking of ardent fishermen. Fly-fishing only is allowed, and the local custom is to fish with thin-winged, bright-coloured flies, small in size, as a rule, and worked in the water for all they are worth. I am not prepared to dogmatize on how a salmon-fly should be worked, and what particular colours of body, hackle, or wing are the most killing.

One heretic Erne fisherman whom I know always fished with his own flies, that in size and pattern violated all local traditions; but he killed his fair share of fish, all the same. True, he was a most painstaking fisherman, threw a beautiful line, and, what is more to the point, fished every inch of a throw. But it is not given to everyone to possess a similar strength of mind and confidence in his own judgment. Personally, I always like to fall in with local ideas as regards pattern and size of fly, for they represent the accumulated wisdom of ages. When a pool is fished blank, one always is inclined to think that another fly would have done better. On the other hand, when a fish is hooked, confidence in the particular fly is at once established; but who is to say with certainty that another pattern or size of fly would not have achieved the same result?

On one occasion the heretic angler above mentioned took two fine fish with strange flies off the south side of the 'Bank of Ireland' throw on the Erne, just behind an old habitué, who had fished the same throw blank from the north side with stock local patterns. The river was dead low, and both had fished the same water from opposite banks. Some might have argued from this incident that the new flies were better than the old; but, as a matter of fact, in low water that particular throw always fishes better from the south side than the north. Probably the position of the fish, the lie of the rocks, and the way the fly came over them, all helped to decide the result.

But whatever the immediate result may be, no salmon-angler can fish Erne water without pleasure, for it is a summer river yielding best sport when days are long and grass and foliage are green. It runs

through typical Irish banks and leafy woods, crystal clear, with swirling streams, rocky lies, and deep pools, such as salmon love. In some places, wade as deep as you dare and throw as far as you can, yet you may not cross lines with your rival on the opposite shore. Hook a twenty-pound salmon in Knather Lane, the Tail of the Island, or in the Fall Hole, and he may take you, panting and breathless, a quarter of a mile downstream, and over and over again put 100 yards of rushing Erne water between you and him before, if you are lucky, you can kill him. Until the gaff is in his silvery side, there is always, in the throws I have mentioned, and several others, a good shade of odds upon the fish. To follow a heavy fish down Kathleen Falls, involving a steeplechase in waders over rocks, banks, and walls, and then see your gillie gaff him in Jack's Flat, is an event that lingers long in the memory.

In days gone by I have killed twenty-five fresh-run Erne salmon in a week, and can yet recall the incidents of nearly every kill. Well do I remember some years ago coming to the 'Garden Wall' late one July evening with two salmon and three grilse in the bag. I was flushed with success, and somewhat lazily inclined, but Paddy insisted on my putting a small Green Parson over the pool. In another hour two noble fresh-run fish, 20 pounds each to an ounce, lay side by side on the bank, and I had made no more than six casts in the pool. Fish No. 1 was hooked at the head of the pool the third cast, played for twenty thrilling minutes across and back 100 yards of rocky stream, and was gaffed. His mate was hooked lower down three casts after, played in like wild manner, and met a similar fate. Curiously enough, as each fish

was gaffed the fly dropped out of his mouth. We staggered home that night with four salmon and three grilse, weighing 89 pounds in all. Such as these are red-letter days in one's calendar. My next best day was below the bridge, when, in a gale of wind, I killed seven fish weighing 82 pounds and lost four more.

There are still salmon in the Erne, for in July of 1903 I was fortunate enough to kill seventeen fish —seven salmon and ten grilse—in seven and a half days' fishing, the largest of which was a twenty-eight-pounder.

CHAPTER XII

THE TWENTY-SIX-POUNDER

Henry Dickson, the keeper, said the water was too low for anything but bait. Until we had a spate the 'fush' would not look at a fly. He was quite certain of that. Had not the laird and his sons, Mr. Robert and Mr. Walter, tried all their favourite flies, and no salmon caught for a fortnight at least ?

Cousin Henry had just arrived for a week's stay, and had made up his mind to kill a fish, by legitimate persuasion if possible—but the fish must be killed. The river—a late one—was one of the best in that part of Scotland, and it had a reputation to sustain. This, clearly, was sufficient justification for heroic measures being tried if necessary.

The weather continued fine and clear, with a touch of frost at night—it was the month of October—and the much-desired spate seemed further off than ever. Two days' grouse-driving and some cover-shooting occupied the first four days of Cousin Henry's stay ; but longing eyes were cast on the river, and especially on the pool underneath the railway-bridge, where a fish well over 20 pounds was known to lie. He had shown himself only last Sunday, and in a taking spot, too.

Then came an off-day. Would Henry like to

accompany the laird to a neighbouring shoot, where three guns were asked, or would he try the river? He elected to try the river. Dickson, the keeper, accompanied the laird and his two sons to the shoot, but the gardener's boy knew the river, and would accompany Henry; and accordingly a party of two appeared on the bank of the railway-bridge pool shortly after the morning train had passed, and the line was clear for some hours. A small 'Jock Scott,' a prawn, and a tempting bunch of worms, were scientifically presented at due intervals one after the other for the salmon's acceptance, but without any result. A small minnow was spun artistically down the pool, and left severely alone by the fish.

'Davy,' said the angler, 'just get up on the bridge and look over the pool.'

It was as well to be sure that the fish was there. The October sun had just come out, and from the lofty bridge the river-bed was plainly visible.

'Tell me what you see, Davy.'

'Aa see twa fush lying by the muckle stane. Eh! and ane's a gude yin: a score of pund at the varra least, sir.' Then, in a different tone, Davy remarked: 'Aa see McTavish coming fra the toon, sir.'

McTavish was the village constable, and keenly interested withal in fishing. He strolled down the road, and watched the proceedings with much interest from a convenient gate. Davy lay low on the bridge and our angler put a small 'Wilkinson' carefully over the pool from top to bottom in his very best form, without result.

'Any sport the day, sir?'

'None as yet,' was the reply; and presently McTavish moved on.

'Come down here, Davy,' said Cousin Henry, 'and help me to rig up a fresh tackle.'

All ordinary inducements having failed, persuasion of a sterner kind was now to be applied to the sulky fish. A large-sized triangle was deftly manufactured from three old salmon-flies and duly weighted. Davy returned to the conning-tower, and the following conversation took place :

'Can you see him still, Davy ?'

'Aa can, sir.'

'How far above him am I standing now ?'

'Aboot ten feet, sir.'

Eighteen feet of hickory and lancewood were stretched across the stream. The weighted triangle dangling at the end of the running-line, and ornamented with a piece of white paper so as to be visible in the water, was cautiously lowered into the stream. Slowly it was dropped down just clear of the bottom, and invisible to the angler, but clearly apparent to Davy on the bridge, towards the 'muckle stane.'

'Lower yet, sir. Noo oot fra ye ; noo bock a wee bittie. Canny, sir, canny ; there's twa fush together, ye ken. Noo [crescendo] strike !'

The rod was rapidly swung low and to the left. The line tightened and the rod bent. Whirr went the reel as a good fish rushed up the pool.

Suddenly the line hitched and—snapped. The rod straightened, and off went the salmon with the triangle and some yards of running-line. Some slack line had been drawn through the rings, and, hanging loose, had caught round the handle of the reel and broken at the first rush of the heavy fish. Salmon No. 1 was hopelessly lost.

Here was a sad disaster. Cousin Henry could find

no language suitable to the occasion, and for a few moments a gloomy silence reigned supreme.

Davy was the first to recover the shock. 'The big yin's there yet, sir. Try him again.'

Cousin Henry with an effort pulled himself together. The necessity for retrieving the position and saving the character of the river became simply overwhelming. A fresh triangle—lead, paper, and all complete—was rapidly put together, and the operation was repeated—this time in grim earnest. No slack line now hung from the reel; and, after careful manœuvring, the triangle—directed as before by Davy from the bridge—gently drifted down to the big stone, lightly rested for a moment against salmon No. 2, and was promptly struck into its broad side. The rod bent, and the tightened line cut the water to the sweet music of the reel.

After fifteen minutes' exciting play a noble twenty-six-pounder was gaffed, and the reputation of the water was saved.

That afternoon a procession of two, with an air of conscious pride, stalked slowly down the village street, past McTavish, the constable, and on to the big house, Davy gaily carrying the 'fush.'

The sequel remains to be told. Cousin Henry departed next day with his reputation as a fisherman assured.

On the following Sunday afternoon an Elder of the Kirk was taking a stroll 'doon the watter.' In a pool some quarter of a mile below the bridge he thought he saw a line waving in the stream that ran under an overhanging rock. He hooked it out with his stick; it was a salmon-line.

He hauled, and the line was nearly pulled out of his

hand. Presently a fifteen-pound salmon lay gasping on the bank at his feet, with a large triangle at the end of the line firmly embedded in the pectoral fin. Here was Cousin Henry's salmon No. 1.

Both the Elder of the Kirk and Dickson, the keeper, had fresh salmon for supper that night. But among a select circle in the strath dark suspicions have been aroused as to Cousin Henry's methods of catching salmon, and in particular as to how the twenty-six-pounder came by its end.

CHAPTER XIII

WESTERN TROUT-FISHING

If the rainbow-trout was first discovered or invented in the inland waters of the North American continent, as I believe to be the case, then it is certain that the noble army of anglers the world over, in this respect alone, owe a deep debt of gratitude to Christopher Columbus. A gamer and more delightful variety of *Salmo fario* it is hard, if not impossible, to find. The fish is beautiful in shape and colour. If the conditions are fairly favourable, and he has not attained aldermanic proportions by reason of age and a prolonged course of bottom feeding, the rainbow-trout rises most freely to the fly. And, in addition to these estimable qualities, when once hooked, he provides, so far as my experience of him goes, the best possible sport, and is often as much in the air as in the water until landed. As a minor point, he is excellent eating. Therefore are we trout-fishermen duly grateful to the discoverer of the country that produced the rainbow-trout.

The curious part of it is that Nature appears to have left much for the hand of man to accomplish in respect to the distribution of this fine fresh-water fish.

There are many beautiful rivers and streams that drain the eastern watershed of the Rockies into the Missouri, for example, in which no trout of any kind were originally found. When I first set eyes on the North Platte River, the thought at once occurred to me—what beautiful salmon and trout water was there running to waste! It then contained nothing but 'suckers'—a most uninteresting bottom-feeding fish, with an abortion of a mouth apparently incapable of taking a fly.

Since those days the Wyoming State authorities—more power to them!—have introduced rainbow-trout into the North Platte River, and straightway for the angler the whole situation has been changed.

I strolled out from the old Pick Ranch one autumn day in the year 1897, with my trout-rod in my hand, intent on casting a fly into the streams and pools of the river I had known for so many years, but had never previously fished.

Walter Cowan, our ranch manager, said the trout were there, though, not being a fisherman himself, he had not caught any. The statement was, of course, accepted, but I wanted practical proof, nevertheless, and in my own mind was not fully convinced without it. As a matter of fact, none of the boys on the ranch knew anything about fly-fishing, and no trout had been so far caught in this particular part of the river, though thousands of trout-fry had been turned in twenty miles lower down at Fort Steele during the previous two or three years.

So I put up a cast of three fair-sized Scotch flies, and commenced operations in the first good pool near the ranch. The weather was turning cold—the month was October—and the fish were somewhat sluggish,

it appeared. But in course of time I rose a fish, obviously a trout ; then hooked something strong and lively, and played for five minutes or more, and finally landed a beautiful five-pound rainbow-trout, a perfect picture of a fish in shape and colour.

A day or two after the capture of my first rainbow-trout, I learnt that there were heavy fish in the Platte. Jim Deacon, the factotum at the Pick Ranch, had somewhere picked up an old ' Jock Scott ' salmon-fly with a length of gut attached, and pressed me to try it in a deep pool under the cliffs about a mile above the ranch, and below an old dam, which had originally been built for the purpose of supplying water to an irrigating ditch.

I thought the fly too large, but Jim insisted that heavy fish had been caught higher up the river on similar flies, and so I took the first opportunity of trying it in the cliff pool. The result was that half-way down the stream I felt a draw, raised my hand, and the next moment my little cane trout-rod was bent double, while a heavy fish, playing like a salmon, ran up and down the pool. I never saw him, and presently the old gut-cast parted. But I felt satisfied that this was a considerably heavier fish than anything I had yet hooked.

I have since taken many a good trout out of the North Platte River, whose reputation for good fishing is now thoroughly established in the West. It is the custom for parties from Denver and Colorado Springs to visit the Platte Valley south of Saratoga in Wyoming during the months of July and August for camping and fishing picnics, when good bags of trout, some running up to 12 pounds in weight, have been frequently obtained.

My next experience of rainbow-trout was in the Mississippi Valley. I had been staying for a week on a business visit in the large western town of Minneapolis, situated on the banks of the Mississippi River. A blazing August sun made the dusty streets distinctly unpleasant, raised a thirst difficult, though not altogether impossible, to quench, and by contrast brought to my mind longing thoughts of the purple heather and rippling burns of my native land, some 4,000 miles away, where daily grouse were falling, and trout were being captured by my more fortunate countrymen, while I was transacting business and drinking lager beer in the State of Minnesota, with the thermometer 95 degrees in the shade.

I was lunching that day with one of my business friends. Our American cousins are the most hospitable of mankind. The conversation turned on fishing. With insular prejudice I openly and most unfavourably contrasted the muddy Mississippi and its catfish and 'suckers' with the salmon and trout-stocked waters of bonnie Scotland. 'Would you like to catch some rainbow-trout?' said my host. 'Where are they?' I doubtingly asked. 'Thirty miles away I can show you plenty,' he answered. I had three days to spare, and the matter was at once arranged. My incredulity as to the existence of the trout, or fishable water anywhere within reasonable distance in which to catch them, was, I trust, more or less successfully concealed. But the country was dried up with drought. It had not rained for two months, and at that moment extensive forest fires were raging in the northern part of the State.

The next afternoon, in company with two grain-men, a learned judge, and a doctor, we started on our

fishing picnic, thirty miles by rail and four by road. In the evening we found ourselves at our destination, a temperance country hotel, where, by-the-by, some of the best bottled beer in the State was obtainable, kept by a naturalized German, and situated in the rolling and wooded uplands of Northern Minnesota. At supper, where a dish of fresh trout finally dispelled my doubts as to their existence, the situation was more fully explained. Close by the hotel were at least a dozen natural springs of the clearest water and of considerable united volume, permanently feeding a stream that ran for some two miles in alternate rapid and pool to the river below. At its head this stream was dammed back into two miniature lakes, where the trout were every season artificially reared, and thence stocked the stream for its whole length to where another dam and pool, with protected outlet, prevented the escape of the fish to the river below.

Our landlord was a practised fisherman, as I soon found out, and, moreover, he thoroughly understood the artificial rearing of trout. He was inclined to look with contempt on the fishing capabilities of the parties of town-bred Americans who periodically visited him on fishing picnics. The gentle art of fly-fishing is not generally practised or understood on the banks of the Mississippi. Would his trout rise to the fly ? Certainly they would. What size did they run ? Up to three pounds ; average, half a pound. What flies did they take ? Specimens were shown me—three-quarter-inch flies of a size and shape calculated to put down any well-brought-up Highland trout for a week. I had a few Scotch flies with me, and produced them. They were not thought much of, and I held my peace. Evidently Minnesota trout had

views of their own on the subject of flies. The evening was spent in fishing yarns, in which the landlord took a prominent part.

Next morning, soon after daybreak, armed with a ten-foot split-cane fly-rod and a cast of three Brobdignagian flies, I was taken to a causeway between the ponds at the head of the stream, and requested to begin. The water was like glass. A blazing western sun had just risen, and my heart sunk low. Who could catch trout in water like that with three-quarter-inch flies? was my unspoken thought. But my American hosts were looking on, and I began to throw towards the shade of the opposite bank. At the third cast the still water was broken by a swirl at the tail-fly, and I hooked and landed a half-pound rainbow-trout. This looked like business. I was left in possession of the causeway, and had an excellent morning's sport. Such simple-minded and voracious trout I have never previously come across. Size or colour of fly, within reasonable limits, was to them a matter of complete indifference, and the play they gave was excellent. During that day and part of the next I killed 137 trout, averaging about ½ pound, the largest over 2 pounds, all well-shaped, good-conditioned fish. The hotter and brighter the sun, the better they seemed to take.

My kind-hearted American hosts professed to know little or nothing of fly-fishing, and contented themselves with bait-fishing. They did not do so well, although the largest trout—one of over 3 pounds—was caught by the judge, the only member of the party who had never previously hooked a trout. He had been stationed in a chair on the bank at the head of a running stream, and a rod and line baited with

worm placed in his hands. Having thrown the line into the stream, he sat calmly in his chair awaiting events. Later on the struggles of the three-pounder aforesaid, that had swallowed the worm and hook, rudely awoke him from a peaceful doze. The fish was triumphantly dragged ashore on a shelving bank, and the learned judge, resting on his laurels, declined to fish again until a larger fish than his was landed. This did not happen, and he remained champion of the day.

After the mid-day meal and siesta a diversion of sport occurred. A cry of 'cock!' was raised. A woodcock had been flushed in some thick wood close to the hotel, and marked down. I borrowed a scatter-gun from the landlord, and the 'cock' was duly driven out and slain.

Next afternoon we returned to town laden with baskets of the 'speckled beauties,' and with pleasant recollections of a most enjoyable and, to me, unexpectedly successful outing.

It was the experience thus gained of the rainbow-trout of America that has encouraged me to stock with this sporting fish a piece of water, of about 12 acres in extent, situated on the Eildon Hills, near Melrose. The water in question is a reservoir, whose fishing rights I own, fed by springs and surface drains, and one small trickling burn hardly worthy the name of stream. Three years after the reservoir was completed 2,000 yearling fry, obtained from the Wyresdale Fishery Company, of Scorton Garstang, near Preston, were turned into it in the month of November. By the following July some of these fish weighed nearly ½ pound, and a year later fish running from ¾ pound to 1½ pounds

in weight gave capital sport during July, August, and September.

On one occasion, fishing for three days towards the end of July, I landed about 100 of our reservoir trout, averaging over 1 pound in weight. They ran and leapt continually when hooked, and generally played stronger and showed more vitality than any ordinary brown trout of a similar size I have ever caught, either in Norway or Scotland.

Another lot of 500 two-year-old trout from the same fishery company were subsequently turned in, this time in March. These grew even more rapidly than the yearling fry, and afforded similar good fishing for two or three years after. Our experience of this reservoir has been that after the third year, when the fish are 3 pounds in weight and upwards, they do not rise so readily to the fly, though occasionally they will take a Devon minnow fairly well in the autumn. The bottom feeding in the reservoir is good and plentiful, and no doubt after a certain age these trout get fat and lazy, and so are less inclined for surface feeding.

I have given these brief particulars of what has proved a most successful experiment, thinking that they may be of interest to my angling readers.

It may be idle to speculate why the monks of old, before steam transit and developed sea-fisheries placed cheap sea-fish on everybody's breakfast-table, used to stock their ponds with coarse fish like perch, roach, carp, and bream, as well as that pernicious fresh-water shark, the pike. Rainbow-trout were in those days, doubtless, unknown. But the ordinary brown trout of the British Isles were then available, one would have thought, and might well have been used

for stocking purposes in preference to the inferior kinds of fish. I am not aware, however, that anything of the kind was formerly done.

But this is a digression from the main subject-matter of my chapter. Fishing, as I have already said, is a sporting relaxation that only seems to grow in fascination, and in the hold it exercises over its devotees, with the growth of years. There are times when it is good for a man to be alone with Nature—when the best holiday he can take in this busy, strenuous city-living age of ours is, now and then, to pass out into the wilderness. And by the wilderness, if it be well chosen, we here desire to indicate the lonely moorland loch or the side of the mountain-stream: where man's only companions are the curlew and the plover overhead; the natural wild life of the green forest; or maybe the wild-deer on the open hillside. Around him are the everlasting hills, and in his ears the soothing, murmuring noises of wind and tree and stream. Then, amid such surroundings give our lonely fisherman a trout-rod to handle, and, as objects of pursuit and capture with cunning fly and light-thrown line, the speckled, gleaming beauties of loch or burn, and so the picture is complete.

It has been my fortune to enjoy for a space all these conditions of a perfect fishing holiday in the heart of the Wyoming Rockies, and the recollection of that holiday is with me still. In the year 1898 I was in Wyoming on ranching and other business, but managed to snatch six weeks for a hunting-trip to the head of Green River, which rises in some of the wildest mountain-ranges of the Great Divide. South and west of the National Park, in the north-west corner of Wyoming, are a series of rocky, snow-clad

peaks and deep cañons, with mountain forest and lake and river in between, that will always remain a more or less happy hunting and fishing ground. Near it is the National Park, whence overflow the wild game from a preserve whose sanctity is absolutely and strictly maintained. From its streams and lakes, 6,000 feet above the sea, amid the wild fastnesses of this great rough country, the speckled mountain-trout will never, as I imagine, be fished out; and here it was, in a splendid bracing climate, that I found myself towards the end of August in that year.

I had come by train from Rawlins to Opal, on the Oregon short line, and had driven thence for 150 miles in a spring-waggon up Green River Valley to Wells' hunting-camp a few miles below Green River Lake. This journey took three days. The first night we stopped at Reel's ranch on Lebarge Creek; the second night at Ball's ranch on Cottonwood Creek; and late the third night we reached our destination, a collection of comfortable log-huts on the river, built by an enterprising western hunter named Wells, who had undertaken, by previous arrangement, to supply me with the necessary men, horses, and camp outfit, for a five weeks' hunting-trip.

There was some stir going on in Wells' camp on our arrival. A 'road-agent' was in the neighbourhood, and had on that very day put a Winchester bullet through the wrist of one of Wells' boys who had volunteered to assist the Sheriff in an attempt at his capture. We had previously heard of this 'road-agent' on the second day out from Opal, at a ranch kept by one Budd, where we had made our mid-day halt. Budd's ranch was also the local post-office, and on our arrival we had found the postmaster in a state of

ON THE ROAD TO WELL'S CAMP.

In Green River Valley.

A Road Ranche.

caustic and eloquent indignation. The previous day he had been 'held up' by a passing stranger, who, revolver in hand, had helped himself to the post-office cash, amounting to some $250; had then added insult to injury by demanding, and perforce obtaining, a square meal; and so gone on his way. Budd, it appeared, was a law-abiding American citizen who had only recently arrived from more civilized parts, and even twenty-four hours after the event his language in describing the episode was quite unfit for publication.

The Sheriff had followed the trail, which apparently had preceded us to Wells' camp, and had there obtained reinforcements. Eventually the pursuers came across the outlaw at bay in the thick pine-woods near the river. They were fired upon, and driven back, one volunteer assistant being wounded; and so the forces of law and order were for the time being vanquished. I did not hear of the outlaw's capture during my subsequent stay.

The day after our arrival I rode about four miles up the river with Andy Anders, one of the boys of our party, for an afternoon's fishing. On the way up from Opal I had caught a few trout in the creeks tributary to Green River, but this was my first attempt in the river itself. None of the boys in Wells' camp knew anything of fly-fishing, and my tackle was at first regarded by them with some contempt. A stiff fishing-pole, with stout line and hook baited with a 'hopper' (grasshopper), was good enough for the local angler, and when a trout was hooked he was promptly heaved on to the bank or over the angler's head without ceremony.

This reminds me of the story of a friend of mine

who was fishing in a western stream with the best of fly-rods and tackle to match. He had hooked and was playing a good trout, when to him entered a native of those parts. After watching the bending rod and tight line for a while, the settler could no longer contain himself, and scornfully exclaimed: 'Heave, stranger! Why the blank don't you heave?'

On our way up the river we passed a small log-hut on the farther bank, which Andy stopped to examine through my binoculars with some care. A horse was tethered outside the hut, which otherwise appeared deserted. Finally Andy expressed the opinion that 'the darned road-agent' was probably concealed therein, and was at first in favour of our return, lest we might be mistaken for the Sheriff and his man, and so vicariously fired upon.

But your keen fisherman is not so easily turned aside. All my thoughts were intent on some good-looking streams I saw in the distance above the hut, and so we passed on and were not molested. I had not come 5,000 miles from home to take any unauthorized part in a man-hunt, and was perfectly willing to let the Sheriff of Uinta County arrest his own criminals.

So we came to our fishing-ground; Andy took charge of the horses; and I commenced operations. The river was about 25 yards broad, with beautiful streams and pools of clear mountain water which, from an angler's point of view, left nothing to be desired. The question that chiefly interested me was, Would the Green River trout take my Scotch flies?

The problem was soon solved, very much to my satisfaction. Within a few moments I had hooked

BREAKFAST IN CAMP.

A MORNING'S CATCH.

THE NORTH PLATTE RIVER.

and landed a good two-pound trout in the best of condition. So it was clear the trout were there and would take. During the next three hours I killed forty-two trout averaging just under a pound apiece. The largest fish weighed 2½ pounds. It was one of the most enjoyable afternoons I have ever experienced.

Green River trout are fine free takers, though what kind of insect they thought my flies to be is a conundrum I have not yet solved. There were no flies on the water like the large Silver-body, Zulu, and March Brown that I used. Then I changed to small Irish Erne salmon-flies, and did just as well.

Andy and his friends were much pleased with the result of our first fishing picnic, which provided the whole camp with a fish course of the best kind at every meal for some days; and their views on the proper methods of trout-fishing underwent some modification.

My chief regret is that I did not spend a week fishing the head of Green River. But the main object of that particular trip was to get a few good wapiti heads, and perchance a bear or two and some other species of Rocky Mountain big-game.

Accordingly, next day I started into the mountains with a train of ten pack-horses, intent on a hunt in the Gros Ventres Range and in the Fall River Basin, districts that I had never previously visited. Our party consisted of Sandy Marshall, hunter and guide; Andy Anders, horse-wrangler; and Fred Kurt, who did the cooking.

During the latter portion of the time I was joined by W. Wells himself, the owner of the hunting-camp from where we started, and a better hunter and com-

panion I have never met. He was a well-read and pleasant-mannered man who thoroughly understood his business, was determined to show sport, and, moreover, possessed that calm and philosophic temperament that is probably as well and as frequently produced by the ups and downs of a youth spent in the Far West as by any other training in life. Some of the hunting incidents of the trip I have already touched upon in other chapters. It is sufficient to say here that I succeeded in obtaining nine good wapiti bulls, with one or two antelope and deer, and, generally speaking, enjoyed excellent sport amid beautiful scenery and in one of the most perfect climates in the world.

It may be of interest here to quote Wells' opinion as to the existing stock of big-game, particularly wapiti, in this part of the Rockies. His emphatic view was that the National Park had been the chief means of the preservation of wapiti as well as deer, antelope, and bear in this region; and that a stock of something like 50,000 wapiti still existed, and were likely to be maintained, in and around the National Park.

The main drawback at that time was the want of a sufficient winter range, under proper protection, for wapiti and deer. This want has since been supplied by a large increase in the protected area, adjacent to the park, in which hunting, although not absolutely forbidden, as is the case in the park, is now under strict supervision and regulation.

The big-horn sheep (*Ovis montana*), in a sense, protect themselves. They have been driven by much hunting on to the highest rocky mountain ranges of the Divide, where they, unlike wapiti and deer,

can live through the winter, and where they can only be successfully hunted by laborious work on foot.

One of the main features, as I have said, of this particular hunting-trip was the trout-fishing. After the first day we left Green River behind us, it is true; but everywhere through the mountains where we roamed were crystal-clear streams fairly well stocked with trout, of which I took sufficient toll to keep the larder well supplied. We were four able-bodied men, for whom a certain amount of fish diet was voted to be absolutely necessary, and so many a subsequent fishing picnic was undertaken. In many of the pools I fished I doubt if the trout had ever seen an artificial fly, and their consequent voracity was highly interesting. The water, as a rule, was so clear that I could often see the trout before I caught them. It was, of course, necessary to keep out of sight. If this condition was duly observed, I found that a fish that was moving here and there in a pool or stream, obviously on the look-out for food, would always come like a tiger at my fly. Occasionally, in the first headlong rush, he missed it. When this happened, it was only necessary to wait a few moments, and then cast over him again, when the fly would usually be taken with savage greediness.

On the other hand, if trout were lying motionless on the bottom, as I often saw them, no fly would move them. They were in this case not feeding, and apparently asleep.

As an instance of their voracity, it is worth mentioning that one day Sandy, who used to clean the trout on the bank directly they were caught, took from a fish of under 3 pounds in weight a small

water-snake, about 8 inches long, that had been quite recently swallowed. In this case my fly was, no doubt, regarded as the dessert after a heavy meal.

One of the most beautiful streams I came across was Fall River, which in one part of its course runs through a wide open valley surrounded by a magnificent amphitheatre of hills, and known as Fall River Basin.

From this stream I took some of the best trout we caught, running up to nearly 4 pounds in weight, and one day I hooked and lost a much larger fish than anything that was landed.

I left Fall River Basin at the end of September after five weeks' camp-life, invigorated both in mind and body, and also with a hope, that has not yet been realized, of some day revisiting this land of mountain, stream, and forest.

CHAPTER XIV

ON A CATTLE-RANGE

In 1883 the Western cattle business was in the heyday of its prosperity. English and Scotch companies had been formed with substantial capitals to acquire, and they had acquired, large herds of range cattle in Wyoming, Montana, Colorado, Kansas, Texas, and New Mexico. Stock-owning in the wild and woolly West appealed alike to the English investor and to the hard-headed Scotchmen of the North Country. Here was any quantity of fine grazing-land west of the Missouri River belonging to Uncle Sam, that was to be had for the asking, so to speak. The summer grazing for cattle through the foot-hills of the Rockies was simply magnificent. Had it not supported buffalo in millions, and wapiti, antelope and deer in thousands, for the past few centuries, or perhaps ever since time and creation began?

Now that the buffalo were wiped out, and other kinds of graminivorous game were in the process of being civilized off the face of these splendid natural grass ranges of a new western continent, here was obviously the chance of a lifetime for remunerative stock-owning on a large scale. Buy the cattle, register a brand, turn loose a crew of cowboys under

a good foreman or two, to brand calves in the spring and collect beef cattle in the fall, with a highly-paid and responsible ranch-manager to handle the cash, do the writing, and generally to run the show, and there you were.

It was an attractive commercial idea that worked out beautifully on paper, but somehow or other, and generally speaking, did not turn out quite so remunerative in actual practice. It was extraordinary how herds of range cattle, bought often on book-count, melted away in the course of a few years from off the wild unfenced prairies and foot-hills of Montana, Wyoming and Colorado. Severe winters, deep snows, and January blizzards with the thermometer '30 below,' were bound to tell their tale, and to exact their full tribute, particularly with young cattle hustled on to the higher mountain-ranges of the States above mentioned, possibly late in the autumn, and after long drives from milder, lower-lying States and Territories.

But this does not purport to be a treatise on American cattle-ranching of twenty years ago. For the purpose of my tale, however, and for a proper understanding of the characters and circumstances with which it deals, a slight preliminary acquaintance with the outlines of western cattle-ranching as then carried on is advisable.

Paper herds of cattle and severe winters were sufficient, then, in their way to account here and there, and to some extent, for the disappearance of good English dollars that have jumped into western pockets and have since given little or no return. But there was another and more occult reason—let us call it—why the yearly records of spring and autumn

calf-brands on many English-owned western cattle-ranches were a stationary, or even a diminishing, and not an increasing quantity during the 'eighties.'

The number of the yearly calf-brand was the legitimate and unerring test of the natural increase and prosperity of the herd. Strange to say, however, many small western owners possessed, about this period, ragged old Texas cows of an extraordinary fecundity, even in seasons when the big outfit of the neighbourhood had had, maybe, a very poor branding season. Two celebrated cows, for example, on Sand Creek, belonging to an old native rancher of my acquaintance and his wife, were known in two years to have ostensibly produced no less than fifty-two calves.

This particular miracle happened in later times than those of which I write, and when small native cattle-owners of a legitimate kind had increased in numbers, and branding other people's calves had come to be looked upon with some public disfavour. It consequently resulted in a dreadful tragedy. The old rancher and his wife were found hanging to a convenient cottonwood-tree in the neighbourhood one fine morning, while rumour had it that the lynching-party who had ridden up Sand Creek that dark night comprised some of the most respectable of Carbon County aristocrats, including a candidate for the State Legislature. The actual perpetrators of this hanging episode were never discovered. This is another story; but enough has been written to indicate how the old open-range system of the 'eighties' gave opportunity for unlawful branding operations.

To return to the point whence I started: In 1883 I

was interested in a Wyoming cattle company, and had spent the months of June and July in the company of our American manager, Frank Earnest, now long since gathered to his fathers, assisting in the purchase and removal of a herd of Utah cattle to our Wyoming range, and in various business details connected therewith. The cattle had been duly collected and delivered at Green River corral, had been tallied, and then hustled and punched into long trains of cattle-cars, and duly run through to Rawlins, in Wyoming, where our Pick outfit awaited to receive them, and, after branding the calves, purposed subsequently to drive the herd of 2,000 cattle, or thereabouts, on to Sand Creek Range, some seventy miles north.

It was a hot August day. For many hours the Pick boys had been roping and branding yearlings and calves in the cattle-yards about a mile outside Rawlins. The air was thick with alkali dust. Over the sage-brush-covered rolling uplands, through which ran the single line of the Union Pacific Railroad, hung a shimmering western haze beneath the blazing sunshine that poured forth its relentless heat from a deep-blue Wyoming sky, and yet a heat that was tempered by the dry, exhilarating atmosphere of an elevation 6,000 feet above the sea.

I sat on the fence of the corral and watched the scene beneath. The wild young cattle were hustled hither and thither, as the raw-hide lariat swung by sinewy arm was dropped deftly over the neck, or, better still, was hitched round one or both hind-legs, of the struggling calf or yearling that till then had never felt the dreaded rope. Two of the best ropers of Carbon County, mounted on handy western cow-

ponies, were at work, and it was a treat to watch them. Chico, the Pick foreman, half Mexican, half westerner, was a trifle slower than his rival, Charley Smith; but he seldom missed the hind-leg hitch, which meant lighter work for the boys who threw the calves for the branders at the fire. Charley Smith, a long-legged, powerful rider of the ideal cowboy type, was less particular how he roped his calves. Sometimes by neck and fore-leg, or by neck alone, they were dragged reluctant and kicking to their fate, and this meant a prolonged struggle for the boys at the fire before the animal was thrown and the brand and earmark duly applied. It is no light task to throw a stout range six-months bull calf, requiring not only strength, but knack.

Presently Frank Earnest, our manager, climbed up on the eight-foot log-fence beside me.

'Charley Smith seems a good hand with the rope,' I remarked.

'There's not a broncho in Carbon County he won't ride,' replied Frank, 'nor a steer on the range he can't throw single-handed, I guess. But,' he continued, after a pause, 'maybe he's a bit too well fixed for this outfit.'

'What do you mean?' said I.

'Wal,' drawled Frank, 'I reckon he owns a brand to draw to, and we've no use for that kind of puncher any more. But, say,' he went on, 'we'll talk of that when we get to Sand Creek. I've a thirst just now that money won't buy.'

No more was said on the subject for the time being. The work of branding was duly finished, and the thirst of manager and cowboys was for the moment quenched.

A few weeks later found us all at the Sand Creek Ranch, on the eve of the beef round-up. Some thousands of our range herds were scattered far and wide through the grassy upland valleys of the Medicine Bow Mountains, east of the North Platte River. The time had come when it was necessary to collect the three- and four-year-old beef steers for the Chicago market. These were the ripened fruit, the saleable assets of the cattle-ranch, whose proceeds were destined to provide dividends for shareholders in the old country 5,000 miles away.

Our programme was arranged as follows: A friend and myself were starting next day for a month's hunt in the Medicine Bow Range, where plenty of wapiti, deer, and antelope, and an occasional bear, were to be found. At the end of that time we were to meet Frank Earnest and the Pick outfit of some dozen cowboys, under Chico the foreman, at the far side of the range, when it was hoped some 300 or 400 beef steers would be collected ready for shipment to the Chicago autumn market. We should then have an opportunity of inspecting the beef cattle on their way to the railroad.

The best-laid plans, alas! 'gang oft agley.' The night before our departure Frank Earnest, Chico and I held a council of war. Chico, our foreman, was a sterling character, with considerable influence over the wild cowboy crew he commanded, a fine rider, and with hardly an equal in skill with the rope and in general readiness and resource in an emergency. An incident in illustration of his qualities had occurred only that day.

The boys wanted a drink of milk, and, of course, the tame old ranch cow had gone astray. Charley Smith

and two or three of the hands had managed to drive a wild young two-year-old heifer into the corral, leaving the calf, her first one, bawling outside the eight-foot log-fence which formed the enclosure. We all strolled down to watch Charley rope and throw the heifer preparatory to taking her milk. It was obvious from the first that the heifer in question strongly objected to the whole proceedings. She had probably never been inside a fence or been man-handled since the calf-brand of eighteen months before; her budding instincts of maternity were now about to be grievously outraged, and under these circumstances a wild two-year-old heifer can be more aggressive and dangerous than the most masterful bull on the range. Charley Smith climbed over the corral fence and walked slowly towards the heifer, impatiently pacing, with lowered head, round the enclosure. The gallery sitting on the fence began to chaff. Chico leant carelessly against the outside of the corral, but it might have been noticed that his raw-hide lariat lay, ready coiled, in his hand.

'Guess she's on the fight, Charley. Mind you don't spill the milk,' remarked the crowd.

Charley's rope trailed in an open loop on the ground behind him, and with a dexterous twitch of the wrist it was sent flying through the air. At that moment the heifer turned and charged quick as thought straight at him, and the flying loop just grazed, but did not catch, her horn. The man quickly turned and ran, gathering his rope as he did so. The gallery sat spell-bound. The active, savage, half-bred Texas cow in a moment was at his heels, and escape from her sharp-pointed horns seemed impossible, when, from beyond the far end of the corral, the

snakelike coils of a lasso shot out into the air, and the loop at the end settled fairly over the head of the galloping heifer. Chico had made his throw, and then quick as lightning had taken a half-hitch round a corral post. The plaited raw-hide rope tightened with a jerk, and brought the enraged animal up all standing within a few inches of Charley's heels, just a moment before he plunged head-foremost over the fence, while a wild yell of cheers and laughter went up from the delighted gallery. The heifer was duly thrown and milked, to an accompaniment of cowboy profanity, while the calf outside went supperless. But the general opinion was that Charley had had a close call, and that Chico had postponed a funeral.

To return now to our council of war. 'That was a handy throw of yours this afternoon,' remarked Frank to Chico.

'Maybe it had been better for this outfit if I'd missed that darned heifer!' retorted Chico.

We both looked at him in some surprise.

'See here, boss,' continued Chico, turning to me: 'can I fire any of the hands I want to?'

Frank and I assured him that he could, if the reasons were good.

In response to further inquiry, it came out that Charley Smith and one Al Hurt, a Rawlins local butcher, had recently registered a brand, the 'flat-iron,' into which the 'Pick' brand could with a few deft touches of a hot iron be easily converted; that Charley's cows on the Pick range were increasing in number with surprising rapidity; that Charley could, single-handed, rope and throw any cow or steer on the range; and that, in short, some straight cattle-stealing was going on at the expense of the Pick

Company, which he, Chico, was considerably qualified if he was not going to stop. Frank usually left all the details of running a round-up to the foreman, and in this case he was remaining behind at the ranch for a few days to attend to some business details, so that it was agreed to give Chico a free hand.

The next day our hunting-party crossed the North Platte River, and two days after we were camped in a mountain valley, intent on a month's shooting and camp-life. The round-up party were to start on the day following.

The Medicine Bow Range is now, to all intents and purposes, hunted out, but in those days it was different. Sheep-ranching was in its infancy, and game had not yet been driven out or exterminated in this district of the Rockies. I had seen some fresh elk (wapiti) tracks as we got into our permanent camp that night, and as we sat round the camp-fire after supper, smoking the anticipatory and contemplative pipe, I well remember looking forward to the morrow with the keen delight only known in its fulness to the hunter who has just reached the happy hunting-grounds. Coming events, we are told, cast their shadows before; but not an inkling of the tragedy that had then occurred, as it happened, on Sand Creek, thirty miles or so away, crossed our minds; not a single foreboding of the news that was to reach us within twenty-four hours, and change all our plans, deepened the shadows of the night.

September had just begun. Elk and deer were in grand condition, and fairly plentiful in the neighbourhood. We had a bear-trap in the waggon. The climate and weather were perfect. There was nothing

whatever to mar our happiness as we turned into our blankets, thinking only of sport for the morrow.

Next day I hunted alone, as I knew the locality, on a steep and thickly-wooded mountain south of camp, while my friend Dendy, with an old hunter named Bob Snell, explored the range to the north. I was fortunate enough, as it happened, to kill a good bull elk that day in rather a curious way. I had ridden nearly round and over the mountain in question without seeing anything but a few cow elk, and was making for camp late in the afternoon, when I suddenly came in sight of a good bull with a small band of cows. The elk saw me, and disappeared down a steep gully before I had the chance of a shot. I galloped round the head of the gully, intending to cut off the elk in case they went up the other side through some thick timber and rocks, as seemed likely; but I overshot the mark. The leading cow appeared for a moment, emerging from cover on the far brink, saw me, and led the band at full gallop back down the gully and round the shoulder of a steep hill to an open valley below. I heard the elk crashing through the timber, and at length they emerged in the open ground far below me, and at least 400 yards away. I sat down on the crest of the hill and opened fire in desperation on the bull as he followed his harem—a bad last—across the open valley not half a mile from our camp. I must have fired at least six shots at him from my double express, and had begun to look upon it as a lost opportunity, when he suddenly stopped, walked round in a circle, and then fell stone-dead at least 600 yards away, and some 200 yards below me. One lucky shot, as I afterwards found, had entered behind the ribs and

raked forward into his vitals. He turned out to be a very good bull, with a fifty-eight-inch twelve-point head.

I reached camp at dusk that night, and found the party assembled round the fire. Jack Savage, one of our cowboys from the round-up, was in camp, his horse's bridle over his arm, apparently just arrived after a hard ride. Something evidently was up.

'Hullo, Jack, what are you doing here?' was my greeting.

'There's trouble on the creek, I guess,' was his reply. 'Charley Smith killed Chico yesterday.'

And so the news was brought.

At supper that night we heard the whole story. The morning after we had left Chico gave Charley Smith notice to quit, being convinced of his dishonesty. His private herd of cattle had increased beyond all natural bounds, and his presence on the round-up would doubtless have meant still further unlawful additions to the 'flat-iron' brand at the expense of the Pick herds.

On receiving his dismissal Charley lost his temper, and, drawing his six-shooter from his belt, struck Chico, a much smaller man than himself, over the head. Chico was then unarmed, and, thinking Charley was going to shoot, ran to his bed under the waggon, secured his weapon, and, fatal error, fired the first shot. The bullet struck Charley in the neck, and rolled up in the thick silk handkerchief commonly worn by cowboys round the throat. This saved Charley's life. The two men then dodged one another round the mess-waggon, firing as they did so, until Charley was left with one loaded chamber, Chico's gun being empty. Charley then shot the

foreman through the body. Six hours after Chico died. His last words were, 'Boys, I die for the Pick.'

This sad catastrophe changed all our plans. It was clear that our projected hunting-trip was at an end—for the present, at all events. All our forces would be required to join the round-up and complete the gather of beef cattle in time for the autumn market. Two of the boys were required to take the foreman's body to Rawlins and give evidence at the inquest. Charley Smith also rode into town and surrendered to the Sheriff. The verdict was 'Justifiable homicide,' on the ground that Chico had fired the first shot. But the unanimous unrecorded verdict of the boys was that the wrong man had died.

I may note in passing that two years later Charley Smith came to his expected and untimely end. 'That's a bad man,' remarked old Bob Snell one night, 'and he'll die with his boots on, you mark my word.' Bob's prophecy was literally fulfilled. Charley, who always carried a 'gun,' and was known to shoot on sight, had threatened a certain law-abiding ranchman whose cattle had been stolen, and who had not hesitated to make known his losses and his suspicions. Fate decreed that the two should meet on a lonely path near Caspar, north of Sand Creek, when the ranchman had his Winchester rifle across his saddle-bow, and Charley had only his Smith and Wesson's six-shooter. As the latter's hand was at his hip, the ranchman, in fear of his life, fired from the saddle and broke Charley's leg, and then 'filled him up with lead' as he lay on the ground.

It is worth noting here that most of the free-shooting characters of Wyoming that I ever heard

of in the 'eighties died violent deaths. Nearly all cow-punchers carried revolvers in those days, perhaps as much for ornament as use. Some few of them who had each killed his man were marked down by public opinion as 'bad men.' By the irony of fate they were generally shot in the end in an unexpected manner by some inoffensive novice firing in self-defence.

Next day I rode into Sand Creek and arranged a new programme with our manager, Frank Earnest. Dendy and the hunting outfit followed more leisurely the day after. We all joined the beef round-up, now deprived of two of its best cow hands, and for the next three weeks we worked with the boys on the range. Each one of us had a string of six cow-ponies. This meant two mounts a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and two days' rest for one half day's work for each horse, with plenty of air and exercise every day for the rider. We breakfasted at 4 a.m., and thence rode forth in couples in various directions for ten or twelve miles, driving back to an appointed rendezvous all the Pick range cattle we could find. After the mid-day meal the beef steers were cut out and herded together; such unbranded calves as remained from the spring round-up were also cut out, with their mothers, and branded; and then the whole process repeated over another ten-mile area of range in the afternoon. Camp was generally moved some ten or fifteen miles every day. Thus, in three weeks a large extent of country could be ridden over, and a fairly comprehensive gather made of all the cattle ranging therein. There were no fences in those days, and the only method of claiming ownership of the cattle was by the brand.

This particular round-up was a Pick affair pure and simple, as other large cattle-owners were then not numerous in that district. As range cattle became more plentiful, and the number of different owners and different brands increased, the spring and autumn round-ups became joint affairs, more elaborately organized. They were duly advertised for each district under selected foremen, and each company or owner sent a boy or two to each round-up in the districts where his cattle by any possibility might range. The round-up of which I am now concerned to write was a more amateur, single-company business, and rendered all the more so by the unfortunate shooting episode already described, which compelled the active assistance of our hunting-party.

Nevertheless, our work was satisfactorily accomplished. To every man was allotted his task. Bill Savage, our cook, was provided with a round-up waggon and cooking outfit of the most approved description, and roast beef, plum duff, dried fruits, and tea and coffee, kept the boys in good humour and condition. The weak part of western cookery, to my mind, is always the bacon. Where the gruesome article comes from, that out west is called, by courtesy, bacon, and what it is made of, are mysteries that I have never desired to solve. It is an economical and exceedingly satisfying food, a small portion of which goes further, and lingers longer on the palate, than any kind of pig's flesh I have ever partaken of.

Another important personage of our round-up party was the horse-wrangler. It was his duty to herd the spare horses and bring them up to camp in the morning and at mid-day for the riders to lasso their respective mounts. He had an able lieutenant in the person of

the old bell mare, the only feminine influence of the outfit, without which no power on earth would, in all probability, have kept together our herd of sixty to seventy cow-ponies.

Week by week the work went on. Gradually, and day by day, our herd of beef steers increased, and our tally of autumn calves branded went up. The beef herd accompanied us wherever we went, constantly under guard day and night, representing, in fact, the outward and visible sign of our labours.

The artistic part of a cow-puncher's work is 'cutting out.' This is the process by which the beef cattle and the cows with unbranded calves are respectively separated from the gathered herd. Half a dozen riders surround the morning's gather of, say, 1,500 to 2,000 cattle. A couple of the more experienced hands, on specially-trained mounts, then ride gently into the herd. One will pick out a cow with unbranded calf, the other a fat steer fit for market, and gradually edge the animals to the outside of the herd. This must be done quietly and cannily, so as not to disturb the general body of the cattle too much. As the particular cow or steer reaches the outside of the herd, it has to be driven out some few hundred yards to where a couple of boys are stationed to hold it. This last act of separation is the ticklish part of the work. The cow-pony must thoroughly understand his business, and be quick and active as a cat to follow every turn of the animal being cut out, and to prevent its frantic efforts to rejoin the main herd. Gradually the main herd is resolved into three parts: on the one side the selected beef steers, on the other the cows with calves to be branded; in the centre the main body from which the selection has been made.

Eventually these latter are turned loose, as well as the cows and calves when the latter have been branded and ear-marked; while the beef cattle, along with those previously gathered, are kept under permanent guard, as already stated.

This brings me to the episode of a night stampede. I have often marvelled at the exceeding stupidity of range steers. It is past all belief. These animals are at times the most senseless of created things. He who drives fat oxen, says the proverb, should himself be fat. But this adage certainly does not apply to the western cattle business. I never yet saw a fat cow-puncher, particularly among those told off for night-herding, and I doubt if such a monstrosity ever existed. Once a beef herd is startled at night, no power on earth can stop them for a space. They will stampede headlong in any direction, and the only thing to be done is to ride equally headlong with them, and keep them together until they are tired enough to stop.

I have known a herd of steers swim round and round in the centre of the North Platte River, floating down with the current meantime for a mile or more. I have seen our whole party expend an hour and much profanity in endeavouring to wheedle our beef herd into a convenient corral at supper-time in order to avoid a night's herding in the open; while only those who have tried it can understand the loss of time and temper involved in putting a few hundred beef cattle into a train of cars within a strictly limited period of time under a blazing western sun.

I have also assisted in endeavouring to control a night stampede of our beef herd, and I shall not readily forget the experience. This particular stam-

CALF-BRANDING

THE PICK OUTFIT.

CORRALL ON JACK CREEK.

pede threatened for a time to undo the labour of weeks, and to scatter far and wide over our mountain range the three or four hundred fat oxen we had so laboriously gathered.

But I must first recount a hunting episode which was the prelude to this particular stampede. During the work of the round-up I occasionally took an afternoon off. The boys liked fresh venison, which formed an agreeable change to range beef. In the course of about ten days' cattle-gathering we had gradually worked out to the more outlying portion of our range, near the Rim of the Hole, as it was called—the Hole being a peculiar depression many miles in diameter, of volcanic formation, the edge or rim of which was a steep hillside, some 500 feet in height, here and there thickly timbered. It was a favourite resort for wapiti and deer as well as bear, as the numerous well-defined game-paths along its steep sides clearly showed.

One fine September afternoon I rode out alone along its upper edge, every now and then peering over into the hollows and steep gulches and miniature cañons below, on the look-out for game. I was a mile or more from camp, when I discovered, to my disgust, that I had only four cartridges in my pocket. For some time nothing but antelope were visible, roaming here and there in small bands on the rolling upland prairies that stretched away on my right hand to the distant peaks of the Medicine Bow Range. These wary animals always afforded good sport as well as excellent venison; so presently, seeing no sign of elk, I rode up a prairie hollow away from the Rim, in order to get a long shot at what appeared in the distance to be a good buck antelope.

He had seen me, of course—for antelope are the most quick-sighted of all western game—and, being short of cartridges, I forthwith was impelled by a 'contrairy' fate to waste two of them on a long running right and left shot at the buck without effect. Returning to the Rim a mile or so further on, and looking cannily over its edge, there, halfway down its steep declivity, appeared to my hungry eye a fine young black-tail buck, quietly feeding. It was a sitting chance, but here Fate again took a hand, and compelled me to fire my fourth and last cartridge in order to finish the buck that was shot too far back with my first barrel. Returning leisurely to camp with an empty and useless rifle in my hand, and a fine pair of deer-hams hanging on the saddle behind me, of course I ran on to a bear, walking quietly down a steep gulch, an ideal chance for a quiet approach and certain kill.

There must be some little imp—not from above, but from below—that now and then, from pure cussedness or an ill-timed sense of humour, delights in producing incongruous and impossible sporting situations. Here I had been riding this country, off and on, for a fortnight or so, always with a rifle on the saddle and plenty of cartridges in my pocket. The very first time I found myself two miles from camp without any ammunition was the very moment I must needs run on to a bear, and a bear, moreover, that had not seen me, and in a place easy of approach.

There was, however, a chance left. I executed a strategic movement to the rear, then a careful détour down wind, then a headlong gallop back to camp, and in half an hour or so I was back again where I had last sighted Bruin, with a pocketful of car-

tridges, and one of the boys along with me who had tempted fortune by bringing two skinning-knives in his belt. But the demon of mischief was for the moment satisfied, and no further untoward mischance occurred. The bear had pursued his leisurely way down the gulch, was duly discovered, approached, killed and skinned in orthodox fashion. He proved to be a two-year-old, light-coloured range grizzly, with fairly good fur and very fat.

Thereby hangs the tale of the stampede. I took the bearskin; the boys took the fat, and plentifully besmeared therewith the leather riding overalls, or shaps, that all smart cow-punchers delight to wear. From the moment of the advent of this plentiful supply of bear's grease in camp, both horses and cattle in our vicinity began to display all kinds of eccentricities. There is nothing that disturbs both equine and bovine equanimity so much as the smell of bear. We might, of course, have thought of this beforehand, but, as a matter of fact, nobody did think of it; nor do I suppose that it would have made much difference either to the fate of the bear or the use made of his carcass had we anticipated results. But both the horses and the beef herd became uneasy in their minds. The horse-wrangler's language became more unfit for publication, if possible, than before, as his difficulties in bringing the horses up to the waggon daily increased. The whole camp reeked of bear's grease. As the boys on night-herd gently rode on the windward side of the beef herd, the balmy smell of bear's fat from their riding shaps was wafted to hundreds of wet bovine nostrils, and gradually, but surely, undermined the nervous systems of the cattle.

The third night after my bear-hunt I was wakened in my tent by the thud of galloping hoofs. It was a messenger from the beef herd, then half a mile or so away on the open prairie. Frank put his head into my tent. 'The beef herd is stampeding,' was all he said, and then he was off to saddle his horse. We always had a few horses picketed in camp, and I speedily dressed and followed his example. In a few moments not a soul was left in camp but the cook.

The night, for all of us, was spent in the saddle, endeavouring to keep our now thoroughly demoralized herd of some 300 steers together. We found them at first about a mile out of camp, where the boys had managed to stop them after their first wild rush of half a mile. Presently they began to bed down as we rode quietly round them. Then suddenly a steer started to his feet again, and in a second every animal was on his legs. Another moment, and they were off in a wild mad gallop that nothing could stop. We all galloped too, on each side, in front, or behind, as we happened to be placed, our whole energies concentrated on keeping with the herd and keeping the herd together. The night was dark; the ground was rough, undulating, and stony, full of prairie-dog holes and badger holes. It was a marvel that the horses kept on their feet. Fortunately, western cow-ponies are as sure-footed as cats, and seldom make a mistake on their native range. It was a wild and exhilarating experience, this midnight gallop alongside a stampeding herd, the thunder of the hoofs mingling with the cheery shouts of the cowboys on either hand—tempered, nevertheless, by the anxious thought that if the herd once

scattered the work of weeks was undone, and all to do over again.

It was at this inopportune moment that one of Frank Earnest's stories recurred to my mind, of a foreman who, under similar circumstances, was once riding in a mad gallop at the head of a stampeding herd. The brilliant idea occurred to him of firing his six-shooter in order to stop the stampede. The herd turned suddenly at right angles, frightened by the shot, and ran over and literally trampled to pieces an unfortunate cowboy who was riding on their flank.

But no casualty occurred on the present occasion. We gradually stopped our stampede. Cattle will tire in time. Sunrise came at length, and witnessed a fatigued procession of the main part of the Pick round-up party back to camp, leaving a contingent behind to herd the cattle, now at length calmed down and spreading out for feed and water.

We had no more serious night stampedes. Possibly the demon of mischief was satisfied with his work. A week later saw our beef round-up accomplished, and in due course a fair average sample of Wyoming range cattle was entrained at Rock Creek for the Chicago market. Our party of cowboys went back to Rawlins to 'paint the town red' after the manner of their kind, while my friend and myself, in company with the ranch manager, spent another ten days in hunting elk during the whistling season on the Rim of the Hole. It was not a regular orthodox hunt, but only a sort of minor incident in what had proved to be a hard and serious autumn on the cattle-range. Curiously enough, however, and as sometimes happens on such occasions, it was in this little incidental sport-

ing camp-out that I chanced to secure the finest wapiti head I have ever shot.

It happened in this way.

I was out with Frank Earnest, and we had ridden for a mile or more over a well-defined game-trail that ran along the side of the Rim, and halfway up its slope, through little groves of pine and quaking-asp. There were elk about, it was certain, for fresh sign was plentiful. Presently we came across a small band of elk, suddenly, in a small hollow, and I killed a moderate-sized twelve-point bull, as we were in want of meat.

We emerged on the open prairie above and thought of making our way back to camp. Then in the distance we saw three bull elk, one obviously a very large one, making over the prairie from a distant part of the Rim straight in our direction. Dendy and Jefferson were out hunting on that side, and no doubt had disturbed these bulls. We subsequently ascertained that they had not seen the bulls, who had got their wind.

Frank and I promptly slipped into a convenient hollow in the prairie, whese I dismounted, prepared for action, and awaited events.

The three bulls ran straight over the prairie towards where I sat behind a convenient sage-bush, then turned rather quickly and gave a fair, though long, running chance, quartering from me at 200 yards. I got one steady shot in at the largest bull, and the next moment the three elk disappeared over the steep edge of the Rim into the pine-woods below.

I thought the big bull was hit. Frank was sceptical. We hunted in the woods below, saw no sign

of blood, watched two of the bulls disappearing over a distant flat, and were returning somewhat puzzled and disappointed to our horses on the prairie above, when in a hollow, and in thick cover, a great pair of horns arose in front of us. My old bull, badly hit, had lain down in the thick cover just out of sight over the edge of the hill. A snapshot through the trees failed to stop him, and he disappeared in the thick wood, to reappear in the open some three hundred yards away. He slowly made his way into a second gulch and disappeared.

We followed cautiously, and, coming to the second gulch, there jumped a range grizzly and three cubs, who galloped rapidly across the valley below us. The temptation was not to be resisted. I got in six shots before the bears were out of sight, killing the old she-bear and one cub, the rest of the family getting clear away.

There was still the big bull elk to be accounted for; but he was nowhere in sight, and, to my dismay, I found I had only one cartridge left.

We climbed the far side of the gulch, and there, in the next hollow, lay the elk, evidently *in articulo mortis*. A bullet from my last cartridge finished him.

It so happened that the first bullet, and the one that secured this bull, was a solid bullet. I had a few solid-bullet cartridges with me that season, and, more by chance than design, had some in my pocket that day. This particular bullet had struck the elk on the outside point of the haunch, and had penetrated forward through the vitals, finally lodging under the skin of the shoulder on the opposite side, whence I took it out almost uninjured. The probabilities are that an expanding bullet would not, in the angle of this par-

ticular shot, have penetrated, and so I should have lost the bull had an expanding, instead of a solid, bullet been used on that occasion.

The head was a twelve-pointer, measuring 61 inches along curve of horn, and with a beam or circumference of 8 inches between bay and tray.

This trophy remains to remind me of those strenuous cow-punching weeks I formerly spent under canvas on the Pick range, and of the wild night we once passed in the saddle trying to stop a stampeding herd. It also remains to recall the tragedy on Sand Creek, which formed the prelude to the beef round-up.

An insignificant-looking gravestone in Rawlins Cemetery also remains to mark the last resting-place of Chico, our foreman, who 'died for the Pick.'

Frank Earnest, our manager, has long since joined the majority. The cattle-ranch we were all interested in is now broken up and has passed into other hands, while the days of the big open-range, company-owned herds of Wyoming and Montana have become ancient history.

The old order changeth, and I am not altogether in love with the change. The riverside meadows and creek bottoms of Carbon County have been enclosed with wire-fencing. Herds of domestic sheep now graze in thousands on range pasture that formerly supported countless numbers of wapiti, deer, antelope, and buffalo. A whilom hunter's paradise has ceased to exist. The last time I rode out to Sand Creek, in 1898, I met a bicycle-rider on the way, and saw no game larger than a prairie-dog.

There was, however, from the sportsman's view, one bright, redeeming feature. Rainbow-trout have been introduced into the North Platte River, formerly

tenanted only by suckers, and have thriven therein amazingly. On my first evening out from the old Pick ranch that last year, I killed as well-shaped a five-pound rainbow-trout as ever gladdened an angler's heart, the first of a fairly long series subsequently basketed. Truly this is a life of change. But there are compensations.

The nature of the local population has also somewhat changed. No longer the cow-puncher of the 'eighties, revolver on hip and quirt in hand, swaggers in spring or autumn, with jingling big-rowelled spurs on his high boot-heels, through the streets of Rawlins, Laramie, or Cheyenne. Eastern civilization—of a kind—has crossed the Missouri River. The day of the small stock-grower with his fenced pastures, of the sheep-herder with his waggon and his solitary ways, of the owner of mining and oil claims, has arrived, and the old range-rider of the west has disappeared.

CHAPTER XV

ON THE FRINGE

FIVE-AND-TWENTY years ago Uncle Sam's writ did not always run west of the Missouri River. There was the outward and visible semblance and authority of law and order—no doubt—embodied in the persons and the jurisdiction, for example, of the Sheriff and, at times, the circuit Judge and his Court of Assize, with the accompanying lawyers and advocates who expounded the intricacies of the criminal law. But at this distance of time I fail to recollect the existence of any frontier police in Wyoming and Colorado beyond the Sheriff and his posse, and, of course, the military 'boys in blue,' stationed at various isolated and scattered posts throughout the west. The State of Texas, it is true, had its own special body of Rangers, of whom I have something to say later.

But, generally speaking, the real law of the land, and the final arbiter of justice from whose judgments there was no appeal, was the tribunal of western public opinion that held assize and took action through the shadowy, mythical personality of Judge Lynch, who executed his own decrees in summary and ruthless fashion. Occasionally the rule of Judge

Lynch was supplemented, and even at times defied, by the law of the revolver—the law and the rule of the quick eye, the ready hand, and the desperate resolve.

It has been said that the abolition of duelling in England has been followed by a loss of courtesy and politeness between man and man, and by a general deterioration of the outward fashion of speech and manners of society as compared with the more ceremonious intercourse of a century ago. However this may be, there is no doubt that the law of the revolver, to some extent at all events, operated to make western intercourse polite.

The old story of the dance in a western saloon is an illustration of the point. I am not alluding to the well-known notice over the frontier orchestra, 'Don't shoot the fiddler; he is doing his best,' but to the casual remark of a fair eastern visitor to her cowboy partner, 'You all seem very polite to one another.' The lady had no doubt been led to expect manners of quite a different description. The prompt reply was, 'Yes, miss, it's safer.' And no doubt it was.

This summary justice, dealt out on occasions with lightning rapidity and without remedy or appeal, had its distinct and beneficial uses in the gradual fashioning of a civilized community out of a frontier mob of all sorts and conditions of men inhabiting the wild, mountainous, and, be it not forgotten, very extensive regions of the western States and Territories. The so-called justice so decreed and administered was often thoroughly sound of its kind, in the sense that punishment or swift retribution overtook the guilty.

This was particularly the case in certain crimes, such as horse-stealing, for example. A horse-thief, when caught, always met in earlier days with swift and certain death, mainly because a man out West without his horse was only half a man, deprived, possibly, of his only valuable asset and his best means of locomotion, and the crime was easy and attractive in the absence of some strong deterrent. The stolen horse itself supplied the best means of escape. So the hand of every man with anything to lose was against the horse-thief.

Remembering this, it is easier for the stay-at-home, town-living eastern folk to realize the full pungency and satire of the Republican orator's remark on one occasion to an appreciative Wyoming audience: 'I am not prepared to say that every democrat is a horse-thief, but I am prepared unhesitatingly to affirm that every horse-thief is a democrat.'

Hanging was the appropriate punishment decreed by Judge Lynch for this species of western wrong-doer, and it was at one time common testimony to the invigorating and salubrious air of northern Colorado that horse-thieves required to be hung, in this particularly health-giving climate, for five minutes longer than anywhere else.

There was another species of criminal—namely, the train-robber or 'road-agent'—who usually met with short shrift when caught.

Early in the 'eighties I was travelling to Rawlins in Wyoming, for the double purpose of looking after the affairs of a cattle-ranch I was then interested in, and also of enjoying some wild sport on the Main Divide. At Cheyenne, on the Wyoming border, I

happened to notice a military guard, armed to the teeth, established in the guard's van.

An inquiry of the immaculately-dressed and haughty conductor, who apparently controlled, for the time being, the destinies of the car in which I happened to be travelling, as well as those of all its passengers, elicited the locally notorious fact that Wyoming road-agents had recently been at work.

'There was a train held up down Rawlins way last week, mister,' said the official in question: 'where in thunder do you hail from, that you haven't heard of it?'

I meekly responded that I was fresh from England.

He then became more tolerant and communicative.

'Yes, sir,' he went on, 'they cleaned out the passengers right enough, and got away with $50,000 of Uncle Sam's money as well. But we wouldn't have minded that so much, only they put some rocks on the line and come darned near wrecking the train into the bargain.' Then, after a pause, he continued: 'It's either the James boys or Big-nosed George and his gang that done it. But we'll have it into 'em before long. My best girl was on that train, I remember, and they swiped what few dollars she had, besides laying to wreck the cars. Fortunately, the driver had his eyes skinned, and pulled up just in time.' Then he concluded: 'And now you know what the boys with the guns are on the train for, I reckon, mister.'

We proceeded on our leisurely way up the foot-hills of the Great Divide, through snow-sheds, over trestle bridges, up and ever upwards along the single line of the Union Pacific Railroad and past the summit station or depot, until we came without mishap to the

town of Rawlins, 6,000 feet above the sea. Here we heard news of a more startling import in reference to the train-robbing outrage. The crime had assumed a more tragic hue. Jim Rankin, the sturdy and intrepid Sheriff of Carbon County, had been murdered by the train-robbers while attempting their capture. He and his deputy had followed the tracks of the two 'road-agents'—it appeared that there were only two; in doing so had penetrated into a lonely cañon in the mountains south of Rawlins; had found their camp-fire yet smoking; and had then been fired upon from the cover near by. The Sheriff was killed, and his deputy slightly wounded. The latter escaped and brought the news to town. It was clear that the robbers had seen the Sheriff and his companion approaching, and had ambushed them and fired with intent, and with the fatal result above related.

The public opinion of Rawlins was completely aroused. Rankin had been a general favourite, and a brave and resolute official, determined to perform his responsible and often dangerous duties with efficiency. I had met him two years previously, when he was a private citizen of Rawlins, and had been much impressed with the quiet thoroughness of the man's personality.

A strong armed party was rapidly organized by the Vigilance Committee in the town for the purpose of pursuing the men who had dared to interfere with a popular Carbon County official; and it was rumoured that the leading spirit and ringleader of the train-robbers, who with a single companion had committed the murder, was a notorious local desperado known, from a certain facial peculiarity, by the appropriate name of Big-nosed George. But

the end was not yet, though we were destined before long to see Big-nosed George in the flesh. Shortly after the events above described, Frank Earnest, our general manager, and I left Rawlins for our cattle-ranch on Sand Creek, sixty miles north of the railroad. For the next two months the business of the ranch, and subsequently the pleasures of a brief hunting-trip under canvas on the Main Divide, occupied my energies and time.

We returned to Rawlins in September, to hear the satisfactory news that Big-nosed George had been captured, and had been for some weeks in custody in the town.

The circuit assize was about to be held, when the notorious train-robber was to be tried, and we determined to stay and see something of the proceedings.

Rawlins now boasts a court-house and a gaol of imposing dimensions, the latter being of a strong and impervious character. Some years later I was shown over these buildings by a local friend with pride, as part of the show places of the town and district. As an illustration of the strong law-abiding and law-enforcing instincts that have now been developed in the west, I remember on that occasion being taken round a series of iron-barred, but otherwise fairly comfortable, cells in the base of the court-house building. In three of these cells, adjoining one another, were respectably-dressed occupants, one of them being a woman. My companion took me round with evident pride, and conversed affably with the occupants of the cells, inviting me to do the same. Naturally concluding that they were prisoners awaiting trial, I carefully avoided personal or local topics.

We had a few moments' general conversation, and presently, after leaving, I said to my friend:

'What crimes are those prisoners charged with?'

He stared at me in some surprise.

'Those are not prisoners; they're witnesses, I reckon. The prisoners are on the other side of the gaol.'

It was now my turn to be astonished.

'What are they locked up for?' I inquired.

'Wal, they've got to give evidence in a shootin case next session,' was the explanation. He went on: 'The court don't sit for five months yet; and if the witnesses who saw what happened were not kept under lock and key, they might be miles away from here when the time came for the trial, and there'd be no evidence on which to convict.'

'Do you mean to say,' I asked, 'that these innocent people will be locked up in these cages for five months merely to make sure of their presence as witnesses at a trial?'

'That is so,' was the calm reply; and I began to feel thankful that it had not been my unlucky fate to be the involuntary witness of some act of violence.

My western friend was apparently quite unable to see any injustice in thus forcibly detaining innocent bystanders for a lengthened period in order to insure their presence as witnesses for the prosecution in a criminal case.

'I guess they're out of luck,' was his only comment.

But to return to the trial of the train-robber. The gaol and also the court-house of Rawlins were in those days simple and unpretentious wooden buildings. The prisoner was well guarded, but otherwise treated

well, and appeared to be on fairly friendly terms with his gaolers and with the court.

The proceedings at the trial, so far as outward show and ceremony were concerned, proved to be of the simplest and most informal character.

The judge, the respective counsel for the prosecution and the defence, the officials, and most of the spectators, smoked freely, whittled sticks, in some cases rested their feet on the table, and generally comported themselves in a manner befitting the free and independent citizens of a great Republic.

There was, in fact, a combination of studied freedom and general independence of all form and ceremony, alongside of a desire to scrupulously observe all the technicalities of legal procedure that is eminently characteristic of the transatlantic, cosmopolitan, new Anglo-Saxon race. Big-nosed George, sitting apparently unconcerned, and almost as one of the spectators, was verbally and in effect arraigned at the bar, and called upon to answer the charge preferred against him. At first he pleaded guilty, and then, at the instance of his learned legal advocate, withdrew this plea for one of 'Not guilty,' on the ground, subsequently advanced, that there was a flaw in the indictment.

Then a legal controversy raged between the opposing counsel until the 'court,' in the person of the judge, was at first visibly impressed, and then eventually bored. The trial was finally adjourned for the day without any definite decision being arrived at.

In the general discussion that took place on the subject that evening in the numerous saloons of Rawlins, some diversity of public opinion became apparent. A minority were lost in admiration at the

legal learning displayed. On the other hand, a substantial majority were plainly dissatisfied with the vague and uncertain outcome of the proceedings. A certain amount of legal controversy was all very well, but, in their view, a hanging was about due. This feeling grew in intensity on the following day, when the trial was continued and again adjourned without apparent result. The legal argument on technicalities had been continued with even a greater flow of eloquence than before on the part of opposing advocates. Now, it was quite in accordance with frontier etiquette that a prisoner, once in the clutches of the law, should be well treated, allowed a reasonable amount of tobacco and drinks, and generally given a good show. But this outward display of leniency was not to be taken as an indication that the stern resolve of Rawlins to avenge the murder of its Sheriff was in any way abated.

Will Hugus, the storekeeper, addressed a select gathering of citizens in Pat Rooney's saloon that night, and expressed the sense of the meeting:

'This yer palaver in the court-house has been goin' on long enough, boys. I didn't calculate to see George get too fat at our expense.'

At this there was a general murmur of approval.

It so happened that Frank Earnest and I had business at our up-river ranch, twenty miles away, and next day we both left town. In a week we returned to Rawlins, and found that the assize court had adjourned *sine die* in order to consider their judgment on the technical plea set up by the prisoner's advocate.

At this stage the patience of Rawlins became entirely exhausted. Judge Lynch took a hand in the

proceedings. Everything was quiet, to all appearance, in the town that night. Next morning the body of Big-nosed George was found hanging to a telegraph-post just outside the depot, and the discovery caused no surprise, although no one could give the slightest information as to how the tragedy had happened. It was rumoured that shortly after midnight a party of armed men, masked and mounted, had surrounded the building in which the prisoner was confined, had forcibly taken him from custody, and forthwith hanged him in the manner described.

Next day everybody went about his business just as usual, satisfied that substantial justice had been done—that the murder of Jim Rankin, the Sheriff, had been duly avenged, and that there was now one desperado the less in the Territory* of Wyoming.

A few years later I had an opportunity of witnessing the proceedings in an alleged cattle-stealing case in the far west. In conjunction with certain circumstances which were indirectly connected with the case, and partly led up to its trial, the proceedings in question throw an interesting sidelight on some aspects of frontier life, and so I will endeavour briefly to relate the story.

The scene was the town of Caspar, which is not one of the leading cities of the United States. It is a frontier town in the State of Wyoming, about 150 miles north-west of Cheyenne, little known until it became the terminus of a branch of the Union Pacific Railroad. It has two streets, at right angles to one another, of the usual western-town description. Its exports are mainly sheep, cattle, and wool, and its chief imports horses, dry-

* Wyoming has since become a State.

goods, and alcoholic drinks, especially whisky. Its altitude—in inverse ratio to its morals and temperance—is about 6,000 feet above the sea, and a gale of wind, with clouds of dust, is always blowing through its streets. Caspar's main industry and source of revenue is the stock business, and its leading aristocracy consists of lawyers, small settlers, cattle and sheep men and their 'boys.' As a natural sequence, in the administration of Caspar justice cases involving disputed ownership of live-stock play a leading part.

In 1893 I had again visited our Wyoming cattle-ranch, and had also managed, as a minor detail, to do a little hunting on my own account in the Grand Encampment district in the intervals of business.

Hearing that Boney Earnest, one of our former ranch managers, was in some legal cattle scrape, and that the case was about to be tried in Caspar, I took the opportunity just before my departure for New York of paying this place a visit, in company with James Cowan, the then English manager of our cattle business. As a further inducement, our cattle company was then interested in a herd of sheep that were ranging near Caspar, and it became convenient to take the opportunity of inspecting them.

A day was occupied in travelling by rail viâ Cheyenne to Caspar, where we found that the pending trial was arousing great local interest, partly on account of the individuality of the parties concerned, and partly also from the special circumstances of the case.

In order to understand and appreciate these special features, some preliminary explanation is necessary. Caspar and vicinity held views of its own regarding the ownership of cattle. Its enemies went so far as to call Caspar as it then was a den of cattle-thieves.

Cattle-stealing out west had for many years been more or less winked at, and even tacitly supported, by local public opinion, and was always one of the chief difficulties of large cattle-owners. When the large public companies, chiefly British, were started in the 'eighties, west of the Missouri River, their cattle, ranging at large on Uncle Sam's pastures, and whose only mark of ownership was the registered brand, not difficult to cut out, or in some cases to alter, according as the animal was dead or alive, were looked upon as fair game. Everybody, it was argued, must exist, including small settlers and ranchmen, many of whom lived for years on range beef that never cost them a cent. Some even went further, and starting, perhaps, with a single cow and a registered brand of their own, in a year or two developed quite a respectable herd of cattle. They had a brand to 'draw to,' and they drew to it accordingly, from the unbranded calves and yearlings on range. At one time there appeared to be no legal remedy for this state of things. Justice, unsupported by public opinion, was paralyzed. Juries absolutely declined to convict, even on the clearest evidence. The larger cattle-men, who were the chief sufferers, became desperate, and occasionally took the law into their own hands.

These strained relations occasionally resulted in serious breaches of the peace. There was, for example, the invasion, as it was called, of Caspar in 1891. Some of the leading cattle-men of Wyoming had located a band of alleged cattle-thieves in a log-hut just outside Caspar. They accordingly organized their forces, hired in addition some Texas rangers to assist them for the occasion, engaged a special train

from Cheyenne, and about forty in number, all told, proceeded to surround the hut. Two men were found in the hut, one of whom was killed, the other managing in some extraordinary way to make good his escape. He fled to Caspar with the news of the invasion. The town rose like a hornets' nest and sallied forth to do battle with the cattle-owning invaders who had thus gratuitously presumed to interfere in its affairs. Caspar claimed the sole right to deal with the eccentricities of its own citizens, and, if there was any shooting to be done, the inhabitants proposed to do it themselves. So it happened that sixty indignant townsmen surrounded the cattle-men, who were compelled to barricade themselves in the log-hut. Serious bloodshed was only prevented by the timely arrival of a regiment of troops from the neighbouring military post. The invading cattle-men were taken back to Cheyenne, where they lay in gaol for a month, and were only finally released on some technical plea. As a matter of fact, the case was never tried on its merits. Among my informants was one of the hired rangers already mentioned. He concluded a graphic account of the incident as follows:

'We rangers were all right. When we found there were only two men in the hut, we looked on and left the job to the cattle-men. They didn't shoot straight, and so let one man get away and bring the Caspar gang down upon 'em. But,' he continued, 'I guess the cattle-men were too influential a crowd to hang. We rangers were a bit off the job, any way, when we found the "woman-strangler" was one of their leaders. For me,' he concluded, 'they can do their killin' without my company next time.'

The 'woman-strangler' alluded to was a certain George Westlake, as I will term him, one of the first of a series of smaller home-bred cattle-owners who have gradually supplanted the large western cattle companies. A year or two before this man had played a leading part in a Sand Creek tragedy. A settler named Jim Avril and his wife had accumulated a herd of cattle in a manner that was altogether too barefaced and inartistic. That the possessor of an original herd solely consisting of two ragged old Texas cows should within a year or so be possessed of quite a respectable number of cattle, many of them undoubtedly borrowed from native, as well as British, owners, was too much even for Sand Creek philosophy. One dark night a band of masked and mounted men rode up the creek, and next morning the corpses of Jim Avril and his wife were found hanging to a cottonwood-tree close to their own door.

George Westlake was generally accredited by the countryside with being the ringleader in this lynching episode, and was ever thereafter known as the 'woman-strangler.' As a matter of fact—but this is another story—he was never quite able to live down this baneful reputation, and in process of time was compelled to leave that part of the country. But the point here relevant to my narrative is that in 1893 he appeared as the instigator of, and the chief prosecuting witness in, the trial I went to Caspar to see.

The defendant, as I have said, was Boney Earnest, an old acquaintance of mine. He had been assistant-manager of our cattle company for a period, and in physique and general appearance was a splendid specimen of western manhood. His youth had been

spent in hunting, and also in scouting in various frontier Indian wars. He had now married and settled down on Cañon Creek as a ranchman in a small way, and was also interested in various oil and mining claims.

As a further reason for the strong display of local interest in the trial, Boney Earnest was Carbon County Republican candidate for the Wyoming Legislature in the approaching election, and a very popular member of Caspar society.

I went to Caspar strongly prejudiced in favour of the defendant, and with the recollection of several pleasant hunting-trips made in his company.

The day after our arrival was spent by Cowan and myself in driving some ten miles out of Caspar, over wind-swept, sage-covered upland prairie, to inspect the herd of 5,000 sheep in which we were interested. They were in charge of two sheep-herders, who spent their lonely days each guarding with his dogs a separate herd, and living in their respective waggons, which were moved from place to place in the open unfenced prairie pastures as the exigencies of fresh feed required.

These sheep-herders have gradually developed, by the evolution of the open range sheep business, into a distinct and peculiar race. Their lonely life engenders personal eccentricities, and usually unfits them for any kind of town life or civilized occupation. They are generally looked upon as 'cranks,' and sometimes justify the epithet by becoming mildly insane. On the other hand, their pay has usually been good, as the western sheep business, as a rule, has been very profitable, and in some cases has yielded considerable fortunes to flock-masters.

Our 'boss' sheep-herder, one Bill Nokes by name, was an exception to the general rule, with a most original flow of stories and conversation. Possibly this originality of mind accounted, in part, for the fact that as a manager of sheep he eventually proved a complete failure.

We happened to meet him that morning, before starting, in the chief dry-goods store of Caspar, where he was engaged in buying a clock for a friend who was about to get married, and who was setting up a domestic establishment of his own.

The storekeeper was displaying his goods, and finally recommended most strongly a particular eight-day clock.

The following conversation took place.

'There,' said the storekeeper, 'is a clock that will go eight days without winding.'

'The blank it will!' replied Bill. 'How long will it go if I do wind it?' and he affected not to understand the general laughter of the bystanders at his remark.

But these are merely sidelights on the ways of Caspar and its inhabitants.

The next day the famous preliminary hearing or trial took place, and Cowan and I went early and secured good front places in the court-house.

It was obvious from the first that the long odds at starting were in favour of the accused. The court was crowded with cowboys, sheep and cattle men, and the leading male aristocracy of Caspar generally. As some threats of shooting the chief witness for the prosecution were in the air, the proceedings were opened by a general search for arms, conducted by the Sheriff's deputy 'by order of the court.' For the

first time in my life—and the last—I was searched, in common with every man there, for the revolver which personally I never carried, but which many others present did. Reluctantly these weapons were, for the time being, handed over to the representative of law and order, to be subsequently returned to their respective owners at the conclusion of the trial.

The case then opened. Both sides were represented by counsel—the accused by a fluent and aggressive Irish-American local solicitor, while the prosecution was conducted by the State prosecuting attorney. The 'court' was embodied in the person of another local lawyer, of conciliatory manners and appearance, supported by the Sheriff of the county and his deputy, armed to the teeth.

After some preliminary wrangling on legal technicalities, the prosecuting witness, George Westlake, was put into the box. He proved unruly and talkative, and greatly prejudiced his evidence by some display of personal animosity against the accused. The hide and head of the slaughtered bullock, with the brands cut out, were produced in court.

The outline of the case was somewhat as follows: The witness, riding the range, had found the hide and head of a slaughtered bullock near the accused's ranch. The brands were found cut out of the hide, and the horns cut off the skull—obviously, it was suggested, to prevent identification and possible misunderstanding. He concealed the hide and head, and next day returned with a few friends, armed with Winchester rifles, and followed the waggon trail from the slaughtered beast to accused's ranch. The defendant, no doubt impressed by the arrival of a party of armed men, admitted that he had killed the bullock,

but at first said it was his own property. Finally, when asked as to the cutting out of brands, he admitted that the beast belonged to a neighbour with whom he had formerly owned a small herd in partnership. The herd had since been divided.

The cross-examination of the witness aroused the feelings of the audience, and was the feature of the trial. It suggested the fact of a long-standing personal feud between witness and accused. It elicited and emphasized the fact that three men armed with Winchester rifles superintended the interview between witness and accused, when the latter admitted that the slaughtered animal was another man's property. Other points were also raised that confused the issue and somewhat weakened the case. At one time the proceedings became lively. Counsel for the defence was endeavouring to keep the witness to the point.

'You give me no show,' said the witness.

'More show than you gave poor Jim Avril,' was counsel's retort (Jim Avril being the cattle-thief who had been previously lynched with the woman).

Caspar was fairly roused by this, and every man in the room was on his feet. The court rang with shouts of approval and threats of vengeance. The tumult was with difficulty quelled by the Sheriff, and the cross-examination was continued; but we considered the search for arms justified. At the conclusion of the evidence counsel for the defence moved for the discharge of the prisoner on the ground that no case had been made out. Numerous precedents were cited, more ingenious than relevant. A heated display of forensic eloquence took place. Piles of law-books were produced and quoted from. The 'court' was visibly impressed, and the audience was completely

bewildered in a legal fog, and lost in admiration of the ability and learning of counsel for the defence. Finally the 'court,' after deep deliberation, discharged the prisoner, taxing the costs of the trial on the county. It was, of course, open to the prosecution to carry the case on appeal to a higher tribunal, but no one seemed to consider such a proceeding likely. The accused made a little speech, thanked the 'court,' was overwhelmed with congratulations, and shook hands all round. In the opinion of Caspar he left the court without a stain upon his character. The meeting then adjourned to the nearest saloons for drinks. The prosecuting witness quietly disappeared, a friend handing him a revolver in court as he passed out.

I asked a prominent citizen of Caspar what he thought the effect of the trial would be on the accused's candidature for the Legislature. 'It will put him in for certain,' was the answer. And I believe it did.

These illustrations of frontier life that I have so far dealt with have been taken from my personal experiences in the State of Wyoming.

For many years I have also been interested in a large ranching and agricultural property in the Panhandle of Texas, where I have more than once visited, and thus had opportunity of seeing something of its inhabitants and its ways.

Texas was one of the last States to join the Union, and in area is the largest of them all. The first Governor of the Lone Star State, as it is sometimes called, Sam Huston by name, was a man of great ability and strong character, if all that is told of him be true. He was the leading citizen and practical ruler of Texas when he went down to Washington

in 1868 to arrange the terms of union and the nature of the new Texas Constitution with the President of the United States. It is generally supposed that Huston made a 'good trade' with the President on that occasion. So local tradition has it, at all events, and the men he represented appear to have been well pleased; for he obtained 10,000,000 dollars from Uncle Sam as the price of the new territorial acquisition, while retaining for the new State the complete control and disposal of its public lands. These same public lands were no mean asset at that time in a territory that extended for nearly 1,000 miles from the comparatively narrow Panhandle in the north—the relative geographical shape of which gives its name—to the sea-coast and the mouth of the Rio Grande on the south, where the State widens out to an almost similar breadth.

As an illustration of frontier character, the following story is told of Sam Huston on this, his first visit to Washington and the civilized east. When the arrangements for union were completed, and Huston had been appointed first Governor of Texas, he received an invitation to dine with the President at a big political dinner in Washington, at which many celebrities were present. It was probably his first experience of the kind, and there, also for the first time in his life, Huston tasted champagne, which proved much to his liking. Towards the end of the banquet olives were handed round, these being an article of diet also not contained in the new Governor's philosophy. He took an olive in his mouth, and, not liking the taste, promptly returned it to his plate. Just then the President looked down the table.

'How are you getting on, Governor Huston?' he remarked.

There was a moment's silence as the distinguished assemblage looked with interested curiosity at this—to them—new specimen of manhood from a distant and then comparatively unknown part of the west.

'Wal, President,' the new Governor calmly replied, 'I like your cider, but damn your pickles!' And a roar of following laughter shook the room.

The probabilities were that the newly-acquired State of Texas was not thought much of in Washington political circles thirty years ago. Its agricultural and mineral resources were unknown and undeveloped in those days. As a matter of fact, the State has hardly emerged from its economic infancy yet. But those were the lawless times when various Indian tribes ran riot in this far western State, and when its white population, on the fringe of civilization, consisted mainly of that reckless, enterprising, wandering class of men who, as trappers, scouts, or perhaps as outlaws — Rudyard Kipling's 'Lost Legion' — have usually acted as the first pioneers, the world over, of Anglo-Saxon evolution.

One of Huston's first acts as the new Governor was to organize the body of frontier mounted police, known as Texas Rangers, to whom I have already alluded; and for the first few years of their existence the time and energies of this force were mainly occupied in protecting the scattered settlers and the sparse white population generally from the native Red Indian tribes, who, strangely enough, preferred their own primitive ways to the new white civilization that was being thrust upon them.

I first visited the Panhandle in 1887. 'We've

plenty of country to ride over,' remarked an old Ranger whom I met that year, 'and we used to hev some shootin' at times. Had a straight up-and-down chance of being scalped not so long ago. First it was hide-and-seek, rough-and-tumble with them derned Indians—Kiowas and Comanches. At last, in '74, we knocked the stuffin' out of them; and now it's the white men we've got to keep in order. Texas was a pretty tough place, and don't you forget it,' he concluded, 'when Sam Huston organized us Texas Rangers.'

From this man I heard the story of the suppression of the last Indian rising in Texas. It happened in this way: News had been brought in the autumn of 1874 of a contemplated Indian raid. A party of Indians in war-paint had been seen in the neighbourhood of the Canadian River, in the Panhandle, where there was a small white settlement. A force of mounted Rangers was accordingly despatched in haste to the valley in question; but before they got there the danger was over.

That very morning one of the settlers, an old Ranger, walked out of his cabin in time to see an Indian in full war-dress, standing, distinctly outlined in the clear Texas air, on a steep bluff about a mile from his door.

The ex-Ranger knew full well the deadly meaning of the eagle-feathered fringe, plainly visible even at that distance, that adorned the red savage from his crown to his heels. It meant that a party of Redskins were out on the warpath, and that possibly ere night the blackened roof-trees of the log-hut settlement and the scalpless bodies of its white people might alone be left to mark yet another attempt of the original owners of the soil to keep their own.

But the ex-Ranger possessed not only a stout heart, but also a trained and skilful hand and eye. He happened to be a particularly fine rifle-shot, and knew the range of the bluff on which the Indian stood to a yard. Sitting down on his own doorstep, he raised the full-distance sight of his army rifle, and, taking a careful aim at the far-away figure sharply silhouetted on the skyline, pressed the trigger.

The savage fell dead on the spot, shot through the heart at a distance, afterwards measured, of 1,700 yards. It was a lucky shot, no doubt, and has been handed down in local history as the one single shot that stopped the last Indian rising in the Panhandle of Texas; for the red war-party whose leader and chief had thus been killed before the raid had well begun, promptly returned to their reservation in superstitious dread of the white men who could kill them a mile off.

The business that took me to the Panhandle in the year of 1887 was an interest that I possessed in the Capitol Ranch.

Texas, as we have seen, by the wit of its first Governor, retained the full control and disposal of its public lands by the terms of the bargain of 1868, under which it re-entered the Union. Here in our little crowded island of Great Britain, the density of whose population (in England) is over 600 to the square mile, it is perhaps difficult to realize what the aforesaid control and disposal of public lands in its future development may ultimately mean to the people of Texas; and also how free and lavish the State authorities were able to be in their first distribution of this public domain in the days when virgin acres were so plentiful and men too few.

So comparatively late as 1880 land was being freely

given, not only to settlers, but also to educational institutions, railways, and as rewards for services. There was, and still is, 'plenty of land to the acre' in the far west. What was then chiefly wanted was a civilized, enterprizing white population to inhabit and develop this wide and fair territory. In that same year of 1880 the density of the State's population was 6·1 to the square mile. In 1900 it had about doubled to 11·6 to the square mile. So there appears to be, from our English standard, plenty of elbow-room yet.

This Capitol Ranch, which I went in 1887 to visit and inspect, consisted of a trifle of 3,000,000 acres of fenced land in the Panhandle, given to the original owners, the brothers J. V. Farwell and Senator C. B. Farwell of Chicago, as the price for building the Capitol or State Building in Austin, one of the chief cities of the State, and its political metropolis. The funds required for the double purpose of erecting the State Building and also fencing the 3,000,000 acres and stocking them with cattle were raised by mortgaging the land and stock to a confiding British clientèle, who, however, have had no reason to repent of their investment. Since 1880 Texas railway mileage has increased from under 1,000 miles to over ten times that amount, and the State has made gigantic strides in material welfare and prosperity. It has become the largest cotton-producing State or country in the world, while it ranks first in all the Union in the production of cattle and horses.

But I fear I am digressing too much into dry statistics. It was on that first Texas visit that I made the acquaintance of a sterling and original western character, A. G. Boyce, commonly known as Old Man

Boyce, general manager of the X.I.T. ranch; these letters being the registered ranch brand and mark of ownership of the Capitol cattle.

I spent ten days in his company during the delightful weather of a Texas Indian summer, driving and riding to and fro for a distance of 700 miles, inspecting a herd of 100,000 cattle dispersed through the fenced pastures of this great property. I say 'great' advisedly, for the fencing and the pastures were in due proportion to the acreage. There was a barbed-wire fence on the western boundary of the X.I.T. domain 200 miles long in a single straight line. The so-called pastures, also wire-fenced, were from twenty to thirty miles square, mostly consisting of absolutely flat prairie growing splendid natural feeding for stock. A young fence-rider, new to the country, was on one occasion lost in the largest of these pastures for two days and a night.

The introduction of barbed-wire fencing into Texas in the 'eighties was not accomplished without disturbance. The Capitol Company had a direct title to its lands for 'services rendered,' and so had a full legal right to fence. But when other open lands were extensively fenced by enterprising syndicates and companies the trouble began. The original pastoral population, with a wide and comprehensive view of the situation, engendered, no doubt, by the climate and the wild, free life, held that all unfenced public State lands, except where special title had been obtained, were common property. The 'Free Grass' movement was accordingly organized, and lawless mobs of 'fence-cutters' destroyed thousands of miles of fence by way of relieving their feelings. They were in due course forcibly restrained by the Executive, and legislation on the subject has been enacted.

The main agricultural drawback in this flat Panhandle country, 4,000 feet above the sea, is the want of fresh streams of water. This want is mainly supplied, in local phraseology, by 'climbing' for the precious fluid, or, in other words, by the erection of windmills to pump the water which is found, as a rule, at shallow depth. There are some streams, of course, the Canadian River being the most important of them in the northern section of the State.

Some of these streams are further utilized by means of irrigation ditches. I stayed at a small ranch in the centre of the Capitol property which was a veritable Garden of Eden, where grapes, peaches, pears, apples, etc., and all kinds of vegetables, were produced in profusion from the naturally fertile loam soil, that only required an irrigation ditch to make it smile with this varied and bountiful harvest.

There are also numerous surface lakes in the Panhandle, supplemented here and there by artificial dams. In ordinary seasons these surface or rain-filled lakes never go dry. In autumn they are covered with innumerable wild-duck. At the time of my visit, in the month of October, the wild-duck were migrating from their vast breeding-grounds and summer home in the far north of the great American continent to winter in the south.

Such flights of duck I had never previously seen, and never expect to see again. Had I cared to do it, and possessed sufficient ammunition, I could have killed a cartload of duck any day by walking along rushy water-holes, or by getting some of the cowboys to ride round the lakes and drive the wild-fowl over me. As they rose in their thousands from these lakes, the noise of their wings sounded like distant thunder. We contented ourselves with keeping the

larder handsomely supplied, these inland-feeding wild-duck being most excellent eating.

Our camp diet was also varied with quail, of the small blue Mexican kind that give the best of sport.

Another of our relaxations was to shoot antelope from the buck-board. These antelope had been here and there enclosed in the pastures when the fences were erected, and had continued to thrive, and even to increase, alongside the cattle. But they were, after the manner of their kind, exceedingly difficult to approach. Old Man Boyce and myself devised a means of obtaining a running shot now and then at a band of antelope, that afforded in our view the maximum of sport and enjoyment.

It is a peculiarity of antelope that they seldom run straight away from a pursuer, but will usually circle round and then cross ahead of him. When we came across a band conveniently situated, I would crouch, rifle in hand, in front of the buck-board, while Boyce urged the pair of mules he drove into a gallop over the smooth grass-covered prairie, not in a direct line after the antelope, but on one side, as if attempting to cut them off. The band would then generally gallop round in a semicircle, and cross in front of us at right angles. At the psychological moment Boyce would pull up sharp, and it was left for me to jump quickly out of the buck-board and take the shot. If the ground was fairly favourable and the start good, I sometimes got in this way a fair broadside running chance at some old buck within 200 yards, and occasionally killed him. Two of the best antelope heads in my possession were secured in this manner.

Old Man Boyce carried a revolver, and knew well how to use it. I have constantly seen him shoot

prairie-dogs through the head at 20 paces from the buggy.

Why he carried the weapon both illustrates a character and adorns a tale. When he first took the management of the X.I.T. outfit, a certain amount of cattle-stealing, to use plain language, prevailed. The new manager, however, in cowboy parlance, 'was as straight as they make 'em, and clear grit right through.' So he proceeded to weed out the 'cattle-rustlers,' whose characters he was not long in discovering, from among the X.I.T. cowboy gang. He was determined from the very start that the cattle business he was responsible for should be run on straight lines.

The natural result was the pronounced hostility of the hands who were dismissed. Two of these men—Jim and Jess Graham, known as the Graham Boys — were western desperadoes of a pronounced type. One fine day they paid a visit to the ranch headquarters in the small town of Channing with the intention of cleaning out the X.I.T. office. Fortunately, Boyce was away, but the book-keeper barely escaped with his life, as a bullet-hole through the desk at which he sat subsequently testified. The Sheriff and his posse promptly turned out, and ran the Graham boys to earth in an empty house just outside Channing, where a shooting scrimmage took place. The Sheriff was shot in the leg; Jess Graham was killed, and his brother Jim obtained free living for two years in one of Uncle Sam's penitentiaries.

All this happened about two years prior to my visit in 1887, and rumour had it that the vengeful Jim Graham, then about to be restored to freedom, was shortly expected in Channing to 'shoot up' the

town in general, and Manager Boyce in particular. A force of Texas Rangers had even been sent to Channing in intelligent anticipation of possible contingencies. They were there when Boyce and I passed through. So it happened that Old Man Boyce, while still continuing to run the X.I.T. outfit on his own straight lines, always carried a six-shooter ready to hand in his hip pocket. But nothing further was heard of Jim Graham that autumn, and when my visit of inspection was completed I returned to England.

A year or two later, in the city of Denver, I ran against one of the Rangers whom I had formerly met in Channing. My first inquiry was concerning the health of Boyce, and whether Jim Graham had come back.

'I guess not,' replied the Ranger. 'We stayed at Channing a month, and then left. Old Man Boyce still runs the outfit, and he ain't been shot at lately, so far as I know.'

After partaking of some liquid refreshment at my expense, he imparted further information.

'Fact is,' said the Ranger, 'the Graham boys made a clumsy job of it. Besides, Texas is a bit more civilized than it was, and means to stand by its Sheriffs. I reckon the cattle-men are gettin' too strong for the rustlers now.'

He seemed slightly melancholy at the thought that the old days of lawless freedom were departing —that the dawn of a newer civilization had begun.

CHAPTER XVI

SPORTING RIFLES AND THEIR USE

WHAT sporting rifle to get and how to use the particular rifle—when it is obtained—in the pursuit of wild game, are naturally questions of great practical interest and importance to all deer-stalkers and big-game hunters. They are questions, moreover, which no man, however experienced, can venture to dogmatize about, because they are partly matters of personal predilection and experience, as well as, to some extent, particular circumstance.

Therefore it is not my intention in this chapter to attempt to lay down any hard-and-fast laws on the subject of sporting rifles and their use, even if I felt competent to do so.

The best school in which to learn how to use a rifle in the field is the school of experience. In fact, there is no other. But the fees are high. Therefore it may be useful for those of us who have been through its mill to record the individual results obtained and the conclusions arrived at—for what they may be worth to younger generations of would-be riflemen. It is for them to glean some profit, so far as the vicarious process is possible, from the experience of others, if they care to make the attempt.

So the following remarks are submitted with diffidence, and with a thorough appreciation of the fact that most stalkers and big-game hunters have their own ideas about sporting rifles and their use; and that the school of experience may, to some extent, even teach different lessons to different men, according as these men differ in physique, in temperament, and in character.

First, then, as to the weapon itself. The primary fact that stares us in the face at the outset is the enormous improvement in all fire-arms of precision generally, and in sporting rifles in particular, that has taken place during the past decade.

As an instrument for projecting a bullet with accuracy, with force, and with despatch, there is nothing like the modern smokeless, cordite-powder, small-bore rifle. Whether it be the Lee-Enfield ·303, the Mannlicher, the Mauser, or the Krag-Jorgensen—these three latter being of a slightly smaller bore than the Lee-Enfield—all these weapons are, in effect, among the most powerful and the straightest-shooting rifles now manufactured. In muzzle velocity, in flatness of trajectory, and in consequent accuracy of shooting, they are all superior to the now rather old-fashioned black-powder express rifle.

So far as my own experience goes, I have practised at the butts with a Lee-Enfield, and killed big-game with a Mannlicher; but—and here I may argue myself to be hopelessly out of date—I still have a liking, sentimental, perhaps, under certain circumstances, for the older double ·500 express, with which I have done most of my shooting when after the larger varieties of Norwegian and American big-game, such as elk (or moose), wapiti, buffalo, and grizzly. A man is

bound to be influenced by habit and by previous experience, and, as a matter of fact, during the late 'seventies, the 'eighties, and the early 'nineties, when most of my big-game hunting was done, the sporting smokeless-powder, small-bore rifle had not come into use, and, even in the later years mentioned, had hardly been invented. Man, being a creature of custom, will probably do better shooting with a slightly inferior weapon to which he is thoroughly habituated than with a more up-to-date rifle to the weight and mechanism of which he is a stranger. Therefore my remarks on this point may be freely discounted. Yet there are some points in this connection to which I wish to draw attention.

First, as to the respective killing powers of the two kinds of rifle in question.

Here, however, we must interpolate a general principle.

The object of every true sportsman who is a hunter of big-game is, or should be, to arm himself with the most accurate and deadly weapon that he can obtain for the purpose. To kill a wild animal cleanly and quickly entails no cruelty; but to wound and then lose the creature is not only an annoyance to the hunter, but, in effect, is an act of cruelty to the hunted. Therefore, although it cannot be altogether done away with, do we desire to reduce this possibility of wounding to an absolute minimum. The hardest killing and most powerful rifle is therefore not only the best, but the most humane. With this general object in view, then, let us further consider the point.

The small-bore cordite-powder rifle of necessity projects a smaller, lighter bullet. Therefore does it lose, to some extent, in shock on impact, by reason

of this smaller and lighter projectile. On the other hand, it makes up for this loss by increased velocity. How far the gain compensates for the loss depends partly on the kind of game that is being hunted, the portion of the animal's anatomy that is struck, and the angle of contact. Also the importance of the respective gain or loss may depend on the nature of the country, and whether the particular animal is dangerous or not.

I can best explain my meaning by putting some concrete cases. The first time I came across a band of wapiti in the Rockies when shooting with a Mannlicher—this was in 1898—I killed two bulls, in two successive shots, stone-dead. They fell to the crack of the rifle. But luck had something to do with it, for, being unaccustomed to the flat trajectory of the rifle, I sighted a thought too high, at nearly 200 yards, and struck both bulls high and in the spine. The shattering effect of a soft-nosed nickel-covered bullet on the solid bone was in these cases instantaneously fatal.

A few days after I shot a good bull with the same rifle fairly through the centre of the ribs, in thick timber, and never saw him again. The bullet probably struck no large bone, and may have gone clean through the animal without breaking up, and so without inflicting deadly injury, for all I know to the contrary. Anyway, I did not get him, as I feel confident I should have done had my old familiar friend the double ·500 express been in my hand on that occasion.

In the latter case, the heavier, larger bullet, moving at lower velocity, would have expanded more and done more damage, although no large bone was

struck. This on the supposition that the Mannlicher bullet missed the large bones, and so passed through the bull elk in question without expanding.

After this incident I went back to the ·500 bore for the rest of that hunting trip, except when after antelope.

There also was another reason for the change. The Mannlicher was an ordinary single-barrel, bolt-action, magazine rifle, with which five shots could be fired more rapidly than with an ordinary double rifle; but not two shots. For a rapid right and left there is nothing like a double rifle; and in woodland hunting, or when after dangerous game, this is a most important consideration. When I lost the bull wapiti mentioned above, there was time for a quick second barrel from an ordinary double rifle in the thick green timber where I found him, but there was not time to get in the second shot from the bolt-action Mannlicher that I carried that day, and so I lost the chance of a second shot.

On another occasion I lost a chance of a right and left at two good wapiti bulls in thick cover for the same reason. The first bull was killed, but the second disappeared before there was time to pump a second cartridge into the breech, and so the opportunity was missed.

Again, there is the question of dangerous game. A quick second barrel has saved my life more than once in the case of charging grizzlies, and these are experiences that one does not forget. The old bull elk of Norway I have also found awkward when wounded and approached too closely. All wild animals strongly object to be shot at—a prejudice on their part with which I entirely sympathize—and some of them

actively resent it; so I always carry a double express in woodland hunting—a ·500 bore for elk, wapiti and bear; a ·400 bore—a delightful weapon—for Norwegian woodland red-deer.

This last objection applies, of course, only to the ordinary single-barrel magazine or small-bore rifles. The modern smokeless small-bore is now made as a double rifle by all our leading gun-makers, up to ·460 calibre, I believe, and even of larger bore still. To such rifles the above-mentioned disadvantage of the single-barrel naturally does not apply.

In spite of the praises that I have sung of the old double express, were I now commencing big-game hunting *de novo* this double smokeless rifle of say ·375 or ·400 bore is the weapon that I would be inclined to choose for all-round purposes; for it combines the flat trajectory and high velocity of the ·303 or the Mannlicher with a bullet more nearly approaching that of the ·500 express in weight, and has also the advantage already mentioned of the quick double shot. With soft-nosed or split bullet it should be capable of almost instantaneously killing anything covered with hair or fur that is struck in the right place; while with solid nickel-covered bullet it should penetrate to the vitals of any large pachyderm if the angle of contact be right.

A word now as to the angle of contact of the bullet and its penetration. My experience of the smokeless small-bore in the field is so small that I can only speak generally and from inference of its powers of penetration and shock. But I have a considerable collection of ·500 bore and ·400 bore expanding express bullets taken from the carcasses of elk, deer, etc., that I have killed, and the place they are found

in the body and their condition form an accurate guide to the powers of the rifle that projected them. The ideal chance for a clean kill is, of course, a broadside shot, with the bull's-eye four inches behind the shoulder. Here the contact is at right angles ; and if the cartridge be properly loaded, and the expanding bullet correctly made (I am speaking now of the express rifle), and the shot be truly fired, the leaden base of the bullet, expanded into a kind of mushroom, will be found just under the skin of the far shoulder. This means that exactly the right amount of penetration has been obtained, and the whole force of the bullet's impact has been delivered inside the body of the animal. This is the desired and most humane result. It means, in fact, almost instantaneous death, within, say, 100 yards.

It is naturally the business of the gun-maker to so load the cartridge and fashion the bullet that these results follow a properly-directed shot. The rifleman can only speak of the results as he finds them. My express rifles are by Purdey, and I have always found his cartridges produce the desired results under the conditions named. No doubt all our leading gun-makers are quite capable of manufacturing the right article. If the animal is quartering, either towards or from the rifle, the results are usually the same, allowance, of course, being made by the rifleman for the angle of fire. Then comes a position when, if the angle be too acute, sufficient penetration for a clean kill cannot be obtained. Here is the opportunity for the humane sportsman to exercise some forbearance, and, wherever possible, wait for a fairer and more broadside chance.

For end-on or nearly end-on shots, if they are

attempted at all, a solid bullet is occasionally the best. The best wapiti head I have ever obtained was by a practically end-on shot. The bull was running almost from me; but I wanted that head, and took the chances. As it happened, the event came off. The bullet entered the outside point of the haunch, just grazed the hip-bone, raked the great deer fore and aft, and finally lodged under the point of the far shoulder. It is possible that in this case an expanding bullet would have broken up too soon, so lacked penetration, and the bull might have escaped.

So much then for the express rifle and its killing powers. Long experience of this rifle by numerous sportsmen in all parts of the world has enabled gun-makers to ascertain exactly the right proportions of powder-charge, and weight of bullet, and amount of hollow in the bullet, that are required in order to obtain the best results. In the case of pachyderms such as elephant and rhino, as well as buffalo and bison, where greater penetration is required, the bullet is usually solid and sometimes hardened.

Turning again to the smokeless small-bore and its killing powers, the conditions that we have to consider are somewhat altered. The bullet, as we have seen, is lighter, harder—for the lead core is covered with nickel—and its velocity is greatly increased. Hence, with solid bullet it is not a good and humane weapon for hair or fur covered animals. The solid nickel-covered bullet will often whistle through the body of a deer, occasionally even where solid bone is fairly struck, without inflicting an immediately fatal injury, and the animal may either recover, or, what is most undesirable, escape, and afterwards die a lingering death.

Extraordinary stories are told of the recoveries of soldiers from apparently fatal wounds inflicted by solid Mauser or Lee-Enfield rifle bullets in the Boer War. I remember meeting the great physician, Sir William McCormack, shortly after his return from the front in 1900. His stories of men who recovered after being shot through lungs, head—even in one case just over the heart—and in other usually fatal places, were simply marvellous. Had these things been told us at second-hand, they might have appeared simply incredible.

My line of argument may here appear to be somewhat heartless and cold-blooded, but the above marvellous recoveries, though altogether appropriate in civilized warfare, are quite undesirable from the hunter's point of view in the case of big-game. All that the humane General wants is to incapacitate as many of his foes as possible until victory is achieved. The more of them that subsequently recover, the better. But the hunter shoots to kill, and it is obviously futile for him to use a weapon which does not achieve his purpose. Therefore is the soft-nosed or split-nosed bullet necessary in the latter case, though rightly barred by the usage of civilized nations in the former case.

There is also this to be said, that the man is more likely than the animal to recover when perforated by a solid nickel bullet. For the man lies quiet and is then medically attended to. The wounded animal, on the other hand, runs and moves, and, needless to say, has no medical attention. It may therefore be argued that, for the hunter, the small-bore rifle with solid bullet is not only an ineffective, but a cruel weapon.

So we come to the soft-nosed or split-nosed nickel bullet. This means that either the point of the bullet is stripped of nickel, leaving the leaden core bare; or a hollow is made in the point; or two or more fine cuts are made, for a $\frac{1}{4}$-inch or so down the length of the bullet from near the point. The effect in all three cases is that the bullet mushrooms out more or less after impact, and achieves more instantaneously fatal results. As a matter of fact, any soldier in the field can turn a solid bullet into the soft-nosed article by rubbing the nickel covering off the point on a stone. So far as I have been able to ascertain, the exact amount of stripping or cutting in order to obtain the best results has hitherto been, to some extent, at all events, a doubtful point. The velocity of the small-bore bullet is so great that if, as I have already indicated, a hair or fur covered animal is shot through the body, and no large bone is struck, it may happen that he is only wounded and not killed, because the bullet has gone clean through, even though soft-nosed or split, without expanding or expanding sufficiently.

The converse danger—a more unlikely one—is that if the stripping or splitting be overdone the bullet may expand too soon, before penetration, and so a skin or surface wound only be inflicted. This, again, is a result by all means to be avoided.

A very interesting letter appeared in the *Field* of June 26, 1897, written by Messrs. D. Fraser and Co., the well-known gun-makers of Leith Street Terrace, Edinburgh, on the subject of a new ·303 expanding bullet then patented by them. My attention has been called to this letter by a leading firm of London gun-makers, to whom I am indebted for information

on various technical points. Messrs. Fraser's new expanding bullet has been expressly designed to overcome the excessive penetration and uncertain expansion of the long and light projectile that is fired from the modern ·303 and similar rifles; this excessive penetration, etc., being the only valid objection, as Messrs. Fraser truly state, to the use of these rifles as sporting weapons. This new expanding bullet is made with diagonal ratchet slots cut obliquely downwards through the metallic envelope at an angle opposite to that of the rifling of the barrel of the rifle in which it is intended to be used. By this means the spin of the bullet is utilized, in addition to the effect of impact, to produce instant and regular stripping of the hard metallic envelope necessarily used in bullets of this calibre, and consequent free expansion of the soft lead core.

Most satisfactory results were obtained in a full series of experiments with this bullet, which are well explained in the letter referred to by a number of interesting illustrations of the bullet after practical use and expansion.

I much regret that I have no adequate collection of the nickel-covered small-bore bullets, as I have of the ordinary express bullets, taken from the bodies of deer killed, to exemplify the comparative expansion and penetration of these projectiles.

For one or two seasons I had a Mannlicher rifle with me on Hitteren, but, somehow or other, I could seldom bring myself to use it in place of my old familiar friend the ·400 black-powder express. Even in these matters sentiment, or perhaps superstition, has some influence. The feeling that it might be unlucky to put aside an old and faithful weapon that

was serving me well for a new and untried rifle always prevailed in the end. So I generally stuck to the ·400 express.

One of our party, H. M. Denny, used a Mannlicher for two seasons, and found its killing powers excellent. I well remember one fine stag, an eleven-pointer, that he killed with this rifle. It was an end-on shot. The stag was running from him, and the bullet, entering between the haunches, raked the animal fore and aft. This particular shot, the effects of which we carefully examined, exemplified in a remarkable manner the deadly effects of the modern rifle. Both penetration and expansion were all that could be desired. It was possible in this particular case, owing to the unusual amount of penetration required, that, had the rifle been an express, the stag might have been lost.

It may here again be observed that the foregoing remarks refer mainly to the killing of soft-skinned animals. In the case of large, heavy-boned pachyderms the difficulty has always been to obtain the penetration sufficient to reach a vital spot, and the questions of soft-nosed bullets and their expansion are not concerned.

There is a final and obvious truism, equally applicable to all varieties of bullets, that we may as well remind ourselves of here—namely, that their efficacy must depend mainly on the use of 'straight' powder. A well-known deerstalker and fine rifle-shot of my acquaintance was once asked by a leading gun-maker what particular variety of expanding bullet he preferred. He promptly replied that, having tried them all, he found very little difference, provided the deer was *hit in the right place.*

Apart from other considerations, both the nature of the country and the kind of game to be hunted may largely determine the choice of a rifle. Where the game frequent open plains or high mountain ranges free from trees and cover, the special features of the smokeless small-bore rifle at once possess far greater value than in woodland country. Thus, in such sport as wild reindeer stalking on open Norway fjelds, or when hunting such game as the prong-horn antelope of western America, the antelope of the African plains, the black buck of India, the European chamois, and the different species of wild goat and wild sheep of Asia and of the Rockies, such as ibex, and *oves montana*, *ammon*, and *poli*, as well as in Scotch deer-stalking, many of the conditions inherent in woodland sport are absent. The animals in question are not dangerous, nor are they, as a rule, encountered suddenly and at close quarters. The shot is usually a more quiet and deliberate affair, often at fairly long range, and after a more or less lengthy stalk or stealthy approach.

Under these circumstances the flatter trajectory and more accurate shooting of the smokeless small-bore, as compared with the black-powder express, at distances over 150 yards, are of the greatest possible advantage to the sportsman. Exact calculation of range becomes a matter of minor importance, and the game can be killed up to distances of 300 and even 400 yards with the more modern weapon in a manner and with a reasonable certainty undreamt of in the days of older rifles of lower velocity and higher trajectory.

Also the quick double-shot—occasionally so useful, and even necessary, in woodland hunting—is not

generally required in open country; while the kinds of game I have mentioned are more easily killed than the large deer and the great carnivora and pachyderms of forest and jungle. So a single-barrel magazine small-bore can be the more confidently recommended for use on the open prairie or veld, on bare and rocky mountain-side, and in the lonely heath-clad glens and corries of a Highland forest.

Before going on to summarize the points so far dealt with, there are some minor matters in this comparative estimate of modern sporting rifles that are worth a word or two.

There are, for example, the questions of weight and of cost.

The weight of a double ·500 express or of a modern ·303 or larger double smokeless-powder rifle is a practical consideration. It means at least a $9\frac{1}{2}$ pounds to 11 pounds weight, as against the 7 pounds of a single Lee-Enfield or Mannlicher or ·400 black-powder express. This difference of $2\frac{1}{2}$ pounds or more will tell in a long day's stalking or hunting in a rough country where the sportsman carries his own rifle, no matter how young and able-bodied he may be. Where a rifle-bearer or stalker or gillie is employed, the disadvantage of the extra weight does not matter so much. In a woodland country, however, it is often necessary for the rifleman to have his weapon constantly in hand, for one never knows when the opportunity may come; and if the rifle is not instantly available when looking for red-deer, for example, in cover, or when tracking an old bull elk through thick Norway pine-woods, the chance of a day, a week, or even of a season, may be lost. So the weight of the weapon is worth considering, and

in this particular the single-barrel sporting Lee-Enfield, or similar rifle, easily carries off the palm.

There is, on the other hand, another feature connected with the weight of a rifle which is worth mentioning. My own experience is that a very light rifle is more difficult to shoot quickly and accurately with than a heavier weapon. This may sound paradoxical, and it may be entirely a question of personal idiosyncrasy, but my distinct impression is that a light rifle 'jumps' more at the shot, and—in moments of excitement particularly, and in the case of running shots—is a more difficult weapon to 'hold on' with than the heavier double rifle. The least unsteadiness or involuntary muscular contraction at the psychological moment when the trigger is pressed appears to have, in my view, a greater effect in the former case than the latter. With the heavier weapon, on the other hand, provided, of course, it is a well-balanced, well-fitting rifle, it has always seemed to me easier to shoot accurately in the case of quick shots at running game, and the rifle is more easily held and kept steadily on the mark.

If the question of cost is to be considered, the single cordite rifle is again easily first in the field. A well-made single-barrel sporting Lee-Enfield or Mannlicher can be bought for from £7 to £12, whereas any kind of a double rifle, particularly the modern cordite variety, costs nearly five times as much, owing to the care with which a double-barrel requires to be made and sighted, and the strength and quality of metal that is necessary in the breech. It may be as well here to say a word of warning against ever attempting to use cordite or any kind of nitro-powder in an ordinary black-powder express, no matter how good

a weapon the latter may be. A double cordite rifle requires to be specially manufactured in order to resist nitro-powders.

While on the subject of weapons for big-game hunting, a word on smooth-bores may not be out of place. For immediate shock at close quarters there is nothing like a smooth-bore, say a No. 12 bore, firing a solid spherical bullet. There is no question here of expansion of the bullet, but the immediately paralyzing effects of a large solid bullet at close quarters, say 50 yards or under, is undoubted; for wild-boar driven to the sportsman in thick cover, or even for any larger game, at close quarters, no better weapon can be chosen. It is fairly handy, and gives the opportunity of a quick double-shot.

The drawback of a smooth-bore, and it is a serious one, is that for ranges over 50 yards it cannot be relied on, either for accuracy or force. Even 50 yards is a long range for this weapon. It is not, in fact, a weapon of precision. Therefore it can only be regarded as supplementary to a rifle, and for the special close ranges I have mentioned.

Let us now sum up the general conclusions to be arrived at. The lightest, handiest, and most accurate rifle, as well as the cheapest, for all ordinary kinds of big-game shooting is undoubtedly, then, the single-barrel cordite-powder magazine Lee-Enfield, Mannlicher, Mauser, or suchlike. (Each civilized country seems to have its own particular variety of this weapon.) The fact of a powder being smokeless — a point I might have touched on earlier—is of great importance to the sportsman. He can better see the effect of his shot, a second and following shots can be more quickly fired, and where a dangerous animal at moderately

close quarters is being fired at, the whereabouts of the rifleman is not so readily given away.

For all ordinary purposes, particularly for hair or fur covered game, some form of soft-nosed or split-nosed and expanding bullet is essential for this, as for the older express rifle.

If the sportsman is undeterred by cost, and wants the advantage of a double rifle for forest or jungle shooting, and does not object to increased weight, a double cordite rifle, say ·375 or ·400 bore, can safely be recommended as a weapon which, if rightly used, will enable the hunter to face any wild animal under the sun, no matter how large in bulk, how thick in skin, or how savage in disposition.

In the case of the large pachyderms, the gun-maker must be consulted as to the form of bullet and amount of charge to be used. The bullet recommended in this case would no doubt be the solid nickel-covered article.

Where more than one weapon, or a battery, requires to be provided, say for a lengthened trip in some wild, far-distant country, a black-powder-using smooth-bore, say No. 12 calibre, firing a solid spherical leaden bullet, a proportion of the bullets being hardened with a proper mixture of tin or other suitable alloy, might advantageously be added to the weapons above-mentioned; or, as an equivalent alternative, an ordinary double ·500 bore black-powder express. One advantage of this latter weapon is that the hunter can reload his cartridges in camp, if a supply of ordinary black powder, wads, caps, etc., and one or two appropriate tools, be taken. Nitro-powder cartridges must be bought from good gun-makers, and cannot be loaded by amateurs.

Having dilated at some length on the weapon itself, I will now, with some diffidence, proceed to say something of the methods and manner of its use. The art of rifle-shooting, whether on the range or in the field, is something that can only be effectually learnt by practical experience. An ounce of practice is worth a pound—I would even say a ton—of theory. And yet, as has already been observed, the precepts of those who have had some experience may still be worth a trifle to other and younger men.

A preliminary observation is that a rifle should be fitted to the user thereof in length and bend of stock as carefully as a frock-coat is fitted to the manly figure by a first-class London tailor. The sporting rifle should come to the shoulder by instinctive, automatic movement and without taking thought. Careful fitting plus constant practice are the only conditions that achieve this result. I have always preferred a rifle-stock with pistol-grip and slightly on the long side. A rifle requires to be held a trifle firmer than a gun, and well into the shoulder; otherwise no good quick shooting can be done with any degree of certainty. The pistol-grip and longish stock help the firmer grip.

Then as to the sighting. The eye must be trained by practice to align the sights with instantaneous accuracy. One of the practical difficulties is to know how much foresight to take in varying lights, according to the time of day and the nature of the ground and its cover, and also according to the kind of shot, whether uphill, downhill, or on the flat. Nothing but practice and a thorough familiarity with the weapon used can give this knowledge, which is mainly instinctive. What the best kinds of sights are for a

sporting rifle will probably always remain a matter of some controversy. I have always preferred a plain open V backsight, with ivory inverted Λ, terminating a shade below the point of the opening, to catch the eye; and the foresight a plain, bright bead. Sporting express rifles are generally made with a series of elevating flaps for every 50 yards of range over 100 yards, and in some cases over the first 50 yards. In the case of cordite rifles, there is usually a flap for every 100 yards of additional range. Personally, I object to these flaps for sporting purposes, and have never used them. I have always had them removed from my rifles or screwed down. The argument in support is this: The distance over point-blank range has to be instinctively and rapidly calculated, in any event, and it is just as easy, with practice, to make this calculation and shoot accordingly up to any ordinary distance at which game is killed, say a limit of 400 yards, without the elevating flaps as with them. In the former case a trifle more foresight requires to be taken in the V backsight. In the latter case the appropriate flap requires to be lifted, and then the same amount of foresight is taken. To my mind the former operation is as easy as the latter, while all danger of a flap being accidentally raised and inadvertently used at point-plank range is avoided. I have known this happen with disastrous results—to the rifleman—on more than one occasion.

It may be as well here to clear our minds on the subject of the term 'point-blank' range, and what it exactly means.

The term itself is a loose expression. Theoretically, there is no such thing as 'point-blank' range, or a range at which the bullet travels in a direct horizontal

line to the mark. The bullet drops from the moment it leaves the muzzle of the rifle. In other words, its whole line of flight is a downward and increasing curve from the rifle-muzzle to the limit of its flight. With a smooth-bore, for example, the solid 12 calibre bullet forms quite an appreciable curve in a flight of 100 yards.

For ordinary practical purposes this curve, in the case of modern express rifles, and still more with small-bore cordite rifles, is inappreciable up to what is termed their point-blank range. At the same time, in order that a rifle should exactly hit the mark at this so-called point-blank range—better described as 'fixed-sight' range—the rifle is sighted, or, in the case of a double rifle, the rib between the barrels is raised towards the breech, so that the curve is allowed for. In other words, the rifle is sighted so that the barrel is actually pointing, when truly aligned, *above* the object aimed at. The point-blank or fixed-sight range is the distance at which the bullet, in its curved flight, has returned to the same horizontal level at which it left the rifle-muzzle. This fixed-sight range is usually, as I have said, a distance of 100 yards.

So much for a rough description of the scientific facts. For practical purposes the curve of a ·303 projectile in the first 100, or even 200, yards of its flight is a negligible quantity. For sporting purposes it may be generally disregarded. If such a rifle were firmly fixed in a rest, with the barrel accurately horizontal, the projectile fired from it, theoretically falling—by the action of gravity—from the moment it leaves the barrel, in effect only drops 4 inches in the first 200 yards of its flight. The bullet fired from a black-powder express—·400, ·450,

or ·500 bore—drops from 9 to 12 inches, according to the size of bore, in the same distance. This difference between 4 and 9 to 12 inches in 200 yards represents the difference in the respective trajectories, or lines of flight of the projectile, of the two classes of rifle.

So the curve of the bullet's flight may be disregarded, as I have said, for sporting purposes at what is termed the point-blank or fixed-sight range, this range usually, in both classes of rifle, being 100 yards. The reason is that this curve or variation from the straight line of flight makes no difference, anywhere within the fixed-sight range of either rifle, in the result of the shot if the aim be correct. Thus a hit anywhere within the circumference of a 6 or even 8 inch bull's-eye behind the shoulder of red-deer, moose, etc., that is shot at, means a kill. Beyond the point-blank range the foresight must be proportionately elevated by means of flaps on the backsight, or by taking a fuller foresight, as already described; the amount of this elevation being, of course, greater with the black-powder express than with the smokeless-powder small-bore.

With modern rifles the point dealt with is largely academic. But it is well for the rifleman to understand the general principle underlying the term point-blank range, for it may happen to him some day to use a smooth-bore or an antiquated Snider or Enfield rifle in the field. Then a practical consideration arises. He must remember, in these cases, the greater curve, the higher trajectory, of the bullet's flight; otherwise at short ranges he may overshoot the mark. If a stag or other animal is missed at 50 yards, in the large majority of cases it will be because a fine sight was not taken, and the bullet went too high.

It is a golden rule, with any rifle, to take the finest possible sight at short ranges, for the reasons indicated above.

At distances over 400 yards elevating flaps may be of advantage. But it is not often that game is killed at over 400 yards, or even fired at. Telescope sights are advocated by some gun-makers, and by some deer-stalkers I have met. No doubt they give definition, particularly for the middle-aged deer-stalker whose sight may not be so keen as formerly. I once tried a telescope sight in the Rockies, and promptly discarded it. I found it cumbersome and unsatisfactory. But my experience of it was so short that it is a point on which I cannot write with any authority.

Then there is the trigger and the pull. This is the mechanism and the operation on which successful results largely depend. The alignment may be perfect, but if the trigger is pulled with a jerk and the alignment disturbed at the moment of firing a certain miss is the result. To press the trigger gradually and firmly, with open eye, and meanwhile to hold the foresight correctly on the mark, is the main secret of accurate rifle-shooting. *How* to do this is the same old story; it can only be learnt by continual practice. But the actual 'pull' (or resistance) of the trigger is an important mechanical item. The harder the pull, the more difficult it is to shoot with accuracy. The pull of a sporting rifle should not exceed a maximum of 4½ pounds, and may be lighter with advantage, provided the safety limit be not passed, and provided the hammerless or bolt-action mechanism, as the case may be, allows. The historic Mr. Briggs killed his first stag, we all know, because his rifle

went off sooner than he expected. But we may take this to be the exception which proves the rule.

The movement or recoil of a rifle at the moment of discharge also requires to be considered. This movement is either up or down, and known as the 'jump'; or lateral, and known as the 'flip.' The extent of this 'jump' or 'flip' must largely depend on how a rifle is held. For my part I advocate, not as a result of any scientific calculation, but from practical experience, that a sporting rifle should be gripped firmly when fired. There is a nervous elasticity in the human grip of a rifle that is the best possible corrective for excess of 'jump' or 'flip.'

Here is a curious fact that anyone can test for himself. Take a modern express or small-bore firing a full charge. Align it carefully from a rest, such as a stone or a log, and then pull the trigger, holding the weapon loosely meanwhile. No matter how accurate the aim, the bullet will fly wide of the mark. The 'jump' or kick of the rifle off the inanimate rest is presumably the cause. When firing from such a rest in the field—and I think the practice a bad one with modern rifles—I have always found that it is absolutely necessary to hold the rifle with an extra firm and rigid grasp if good shooting is to result.

The old heavy Norske rifle, weighing about 12 pounds, and firing a comparatively light charge of powder, worked well from a rest, because the weight of the rifle, combined with the lighter charge, minimized the 'jump.' The lighter weight and stronger charge of the modern weapon make all the difference in this respect.

I was once practising with two rifles at Purdey's range near London. One rifle was a double ·500

bore, the other a sporting Mannlicher. I commenced with twenty or thirty shots from the ·500 bore, the heavier weapon, with the greater recoil, and did fairly well. Then I took up the Mannlicher, and was much puzzled to find that for the first few shots I fired persistently some inches to the left. I thought at first the sighting of the rifle was defective; but after a time the tendency to shoot to the left disappeared.

The explanation of Purdey's man—an experienced hand with rifles—was that this tendency arose from the difference in recoil of the two rifles. The muscles of the arm and shoulder naturally and instinctively resisted the recoil of the ·500 bore; and then involuntarily continued for a time the same resistance with the lighter rifle that had less recoil. The result of this would naturally be, when firing from the right shoulder, to throw the muzzle of the lighter weapon slightly to the left, until the muscles had accommodated themselves to the lighter recoil. After a few shots the muscles again involuntarily and automatically accommodated themselves to the altered circumstances, and hence the rifle ceased to be thrown to the left. If this explanation be correct, as I believe it was, then the incident described affords an interesting illustration of how the grip of human hand and pressure of shoulder naturally adapt themselves, by practice, to the 'jump' or 'flip' of a rifle, and are better mechanism than any inanimate rest for accurate rifle-shooting. The incident and its explanation also illustrate the importance of shooting in the field, as on the range, so far as possible with the same rifle and with uniform ammunition.

Now we come to the position. The Bisley rifleman thinks a great deal of position. But for the deer-

stalker or big-game hunter the conditions are somewhat different. The range rifleman can take all the time he wants—in reason—for his shot. He has a comfortable mat whereon to lie, which keeps out the wet; he knows the range to a yard; and the distant bull's-eye will neither run away nor charge him.

The hunter must take the shot as best he can—shivering with cold, maybe, or panting with exertion and streaming with perspiration. Also straight uphill or downhill, or on the flat, just as circumstances happen. And, if over point-blank range, he has to calculate the distance by the eye, and to make the calculation rapidly. As a rule, the exigencies of the sport do not give time for any elaborate, long-range, Bisley positions.

It is well to accustom one's self to one or two simple positions, according to the nature of the shot and learn to take them rapidly when the time comes. According to my experience the most convenient position in the field, where time permits, is seated, with an elbow on each knee. It can be rapidly assumed, and is suitable for downhill shots or on the flat, but not for uphill shots. These latter can only be conveniently taken either kneeling on the right knee, with left elbow on the left knee, or lying prone, both elbows on the ground.

I am inclined to think that more shots at game are missed from the failure to take proper position, according to the nature of the ground, than from any other cause. The actual skill of marksmanship required in order to hit a deer in the right place at say 100, or 150 yards is not great. It is, in fact, a very simple, easy matter for anyone with ordinary knowledge and experience of shooting. If the deer were an iron one,

and the marksman in a quiet, peaceful frame of mind, the bullet would probably be placed right, or right enough, almost every shot. In the excitement of the chase the youthful hunter is apt to fire in a hurry, without taking proper aim, and frequently from an awkward position. Hence he does not do himself or his rifle justice, and a clean miss is often the result.

In the case of men of keen and sanguine temperament it requires a distinct effort of the will and some practice quietly and quickly to assume a good position when the opportunity for a shot arrives. The too eager desire to get the rifle off at the earliest possible moment requires to be sternly controlled. The shot may have to be taken quickly, but it must not be taken hastily. There is a subtle difference in the two processes which all sportsmen who have done much big-game hunting will readily recognise. What it consists in can better be learnt by experience than taught by precept.

Occasionally, and particularly in woodland hunting, it is necessary to fire from the shoulder, without any elbow-rest at all. Therefore, this kind of shot should be frequently practised, for at times it may come in very useful. It is always as well to take some kind of elbow-rest where circumstances permit. But it often happens that circumstances do not permit, and so it is as well to be prepared.

Having now written down something of what is in my mind, and for what it is worth, concerning the use of a sporting rifle in the field, I feel constrained to repeat my previous remark, that the one thing really needful is constant practice. The actual shot at big-game is often a quick, sometimes even a snap-shot,

business, in which all the actions are mainly instinctive, and there is little time for taking thought. Success must chiefly depend, under such circumstances, on previous practice with the weapon used, for want of which no concentration of thought or exercise of will-power at the moment can possibly make up.

It is extraordinary how some men who shoot well at winged game with a shot-gun, or with a rifle at a target or other inanimate object, will occasionally miss the easiest possible chances at big-game.

A young relative of mine was with me one year on Hitteren. He was an exceptionally fine performer with the shot-gun, but, mainly from want of experience, and also, possibly, on account of temperament, had no confidence in himself with the rifle. One day we were driving Ram Fjeld, and he was posted on the flank of the drive, at the end of a point of pine-wood where good stags frequently broke. One of the finest royal stags I have ever seen on Hitteren trotted by this young man on that occasion within five-and-twenty yards, and was clean missed with both barrels.

Here was no real question of marksmanship. The stag was missed probably because the chance was so easy, and thus the rifleman was induced to snap at the deer, without aligning the sights at all, as if it were a woodcock in cover.

Another friend of mine, an excellent rifle-shot at a mark, could never rely on himself in woodland deer-shooting, mainly owing to chronic and persistent 'buck-fever.' The difficulty in these cases was not the absence of marksmanship, but the inability to command it when actually and quickly required for use.

All hunters, however experienced, are occasionally liable to periods of missing. I have heard of Red Indians as well as western trappers who occasionally had runs of bad luck—as we may even term it—in hunting, when for days together the bullet would graze the back or the belly of deer or antelope, but would not hit the mark, half-way between. The Indian, being superstitious, would invoke the aid of the medicine-man to remove the curse from his rifle. The white trapper doggedly persevered till hand and eye regained their cunning.

All this merely tends to show that the art of skilful rifle-shooting cannot be absolutely mastered, and, even if possessed in a high degree, does not always and invariably come to hand when called upon. Like the best form of a first-class golfer, it will at times mysteriously come and go when least desired or expected. A man may spend a lifetime in learning the use of the rifle, on the range or in the field, and then at any time may lose his former pitch of skill from want of health or condition, or from cessation of practice. This, again, is another way of saying that the real artistic use of any rifle is a question of fine skill and firm though delicate touch and manipulation, in which good condition of nerve and muscle and the accurate and harmonious working of hand and eye are absolutely essential for the best performance.

Let the young hunter, then, go forth and find out the difficulties and attractions of the sport for himself. I am quite prepared to find that he will scorn the advice of his elders, and prefer—naturally enough—the school of practical experiment. But let him remember that there is a humane aspect of the whole matter. To miss a fine beast, carrying a first-class

head, is no doubt a chastening discipline; but to wound and lose him is a painful and unpleasant experience, both for animal and hunter; while to kill wild game, carrying no trophy and whose meat is not required, merely for the sake of killing, is a wanton and unpardonable act of vandalism. Let him kill, then, in moderation and sweet reasonableness, and as far as possible cleanly and quickly. He owes it to himself and to his class to see that all unnecessary wounding is avoided, and that, when sight is taken and trigger pressed, there is a fair chance of a fatal shot.

It is well, from this point of view, to know something of the general anatomy of deer and other big-game. With the powerful and accurate arms of precision now in use, it is sufficient to be sure of putting an expanding bullet into the hollow of the body in front of the diaphragm—in the case of any wild animal constructed on ordinary principles—in order to effect an immediate and a clean kill.

There are certain exceptional individual species among the wild fauna of the world where some special knowledge of anatomy is advisable. One or two examples to illustrate my meaning will suffice. The exact position of an elephant's brain, for instance, requires to be carefully studied, in order that the hunter may know how to kill him cleanly and quickly. The most vulnerable portions of a rhino's hide may also be studied with advantage, with the same lethal object in view.

The American bison is now, as we know, extinct, but I well remember, a quarter of a century ago, being much puzzled at first by his structure. A ·500 bore bullet placed accurately behind the shoulder and about halfway up his great body did not, as I found

in practice, produce the instantaneously fatal results that were desired and expected. It was only after ascertaining, as I did, that the heart of the buffalo is situated very low down, near the breast-bone, and that it was necessary to shoot accordingly, that satisfactory results—to myself—were obtained.

There are, no doubt, other varieties of big-game still in existence here and there in the world of whose anatomy some special knowledge of this kind is desirable. In such cases it should be the aim of the man who hunts them to acquire such knowledge—for humane reasons, if for no other.

We will assume, then, that the young hunter or deerstalker has provided himself with a well-fitting, properly-balanced weapon of precision, of the kind he most fancies, and with all details of sights and other mechanism arranged as he may prefer or be advised, with due regard, if necessary, to any personal idiosyncrasies. After that it will be his own business to learn, as best he may, and when opportunity comes, to align the rifle with firm hand and steady eye; to press or squeeze, but not to jerk or pull, the trigger; and as he does so with open eye, to keep the foresight on the desired spot. Let him also learn to aim quickly, and yet to aim. This is no case of snapping at a woodcock in cover, or at Brer Rabbit flashing over a narrow ride.

On the resulting direction of the bullet's flight much shall depend. There may be a successful kill, and consequent satisfaction for the hunter, on the one hand, or—for him—a lost opportunity, some disappointment, and a wholesome discipline of patience and temper on the other. He should be a gainer either way.

If I have written anything in this chapter that may prove to be of the smallest assistance or in any way a guidance to my brothers of the sporting rifle, then am I fully content. I am glad to think that there still remain portions of the earth's surface whereon, amid wild natural forest or on bare and rocky mountain-side, are still to be found some wild fauna—carnivorous or graminivorous, pachydermatous or hair-covered, tusked, horned, or antlered, as the case may be.

There will also continue to be bred, unless I am much mistaken, a large class of our island people with whom some form of the chase is not only a natural instinct, but a healthy and deep-seated passion; therefore will these men continue, in reason and in season, to hunt and to kill these same wild fauna, as opportunity, occupation, and bodily capacity shall serve. That in so doing they will learn to study and to appreciate the wild life and natural beauty of mountain, field, and forest; will develop many useful and manly qualities of mind and body; and will gain much health and enjoyment in the process, is the confident and sympathetic expectation of the writer.

THE END

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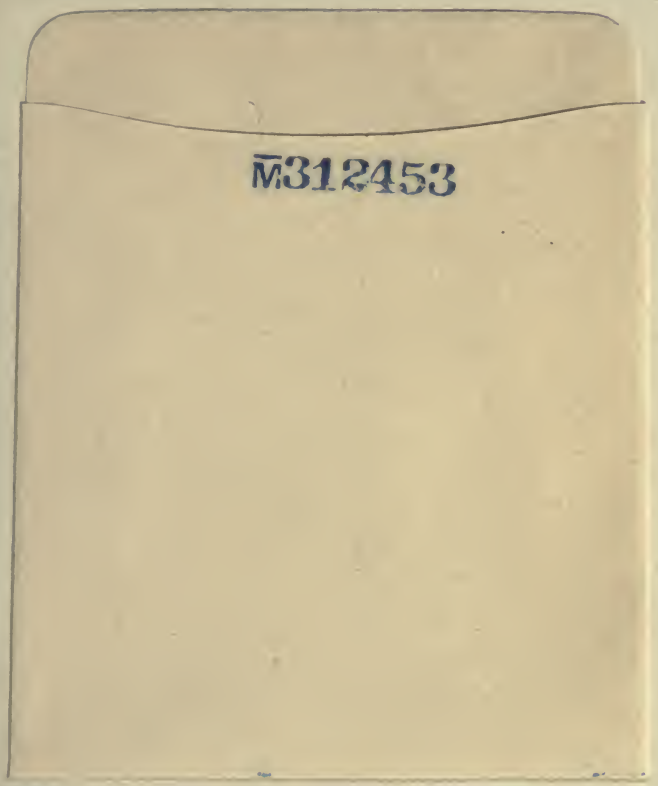
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